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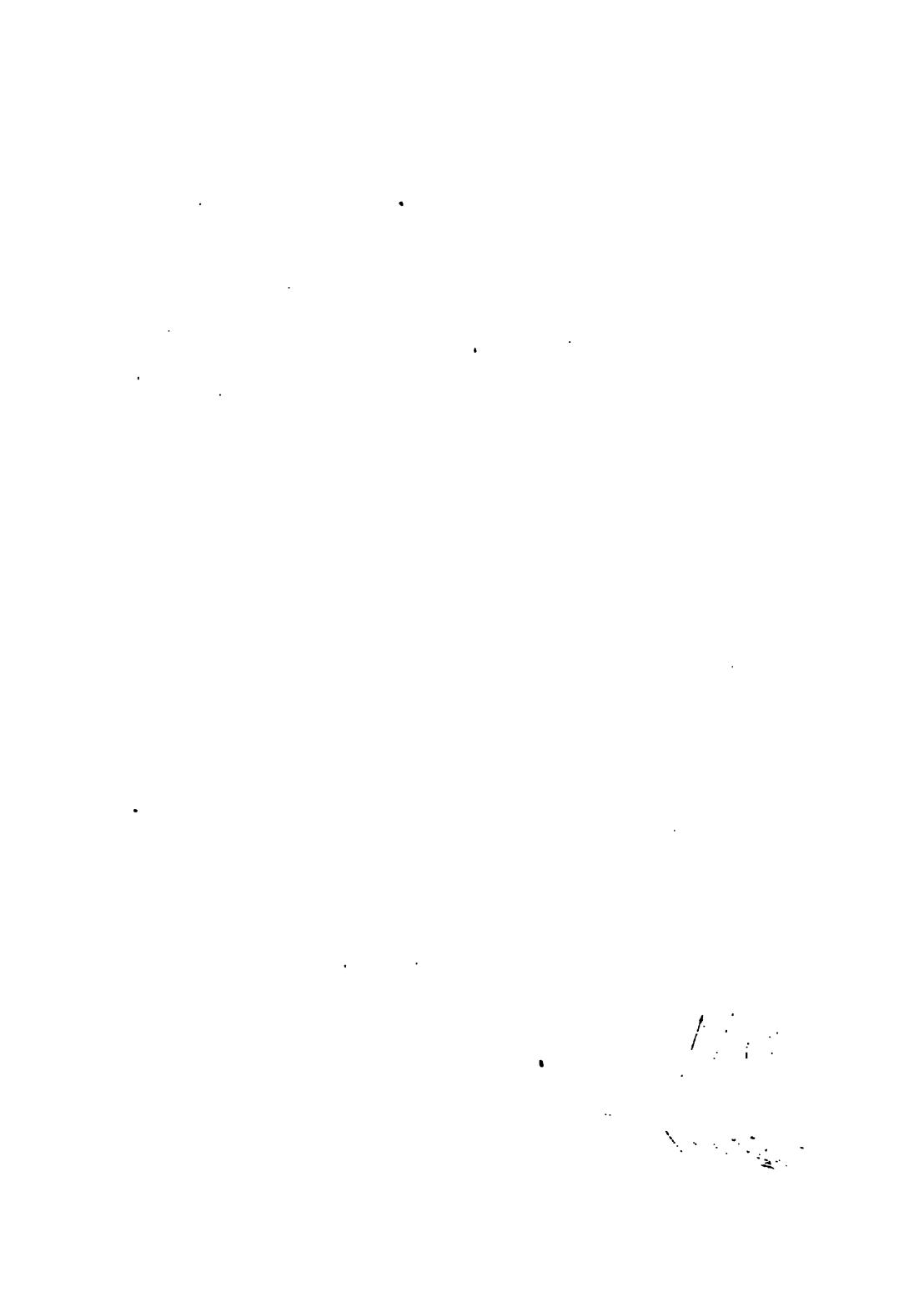


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MY
LOVE TO
MARIA

FLORENCE
GUERTIN
TUTTLE

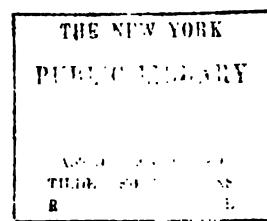




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“Good-by. Give my love to Maria!”

GIVE MY LOVE TO MARIA

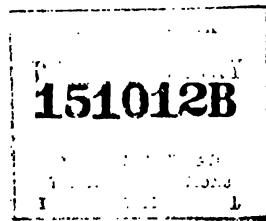
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

FLORENCE GUERTIN TUTTLE



THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK **CINCINNATI**



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TO
F. D. T.

**"Grow old along with me
The best is yet to be."**

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THE STORY OF THE STORIES

AN English woman who has been working in this country for perhaps a dozen years recently wrote to me: "I think that the misfortune of America lies in the conservatism of its women in their relation to each other." If this charge be true, it is serious. For the inference of this remark is that American women, however frank they may appear to be with men, with each other erect great walls of silence that are barriers to their progress. Upon the trite and the trivial there is more or less chatter, but upon things that count and that inspire character there is little stimulation between women because there is so little reciprocity of experience.

When my publishers requested me to write an explanatory word indicating why these stories published in magazines some years ago are only now appearing in book form, I knew that I should have to lift the curtain

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of my own conservatism. For this story of a book's belated birthday involves giving a page, not from fiction, but from life; it necessitates giving the story of the stories, which in turn compels the outlining of a development. And it should be given frankly or it should not be given at all.

Happily the recital is not the usual one of literary hardships. I have no diatribe to launch against editors. I did not knock vainly at their doors. Practically every story that I wrote sold quickly and frequently brought a request for more work. My own experience taught me that, in most cases, manuscripts that are rejected are refused because they should be refused. They are lacking in one or all of those elements necessary for available fiction—originality, clearness, and some understanding of life.

My first story won a prize in a magazine contest. Believing in my work and scarcely knowing defeat, I traveled forward until about two dozen stories, three of them winning prizes, had been published. The output covered a number of years, for I was not a prolific writer. I had no factory for grinding out plots, and there were no schools of

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fiction then to supply unfailing formulas. My stories were born out of the urge to create and were views of life. When a story was written it ceased to interest me; the absorption was all in the work to come. Also I labored over my stories, writing and rewriting, though I cared more for matter than for manner. To have something to say seemed to me more imperative than to become the exponent of a barren craftsmanship. I have left these stories in their original form, however, because to tamper with them now would seem to be a kind of literary dishonesty.

Obeying a request from various readers that the stories should be collected, in time, out of the flotsam and jetsam of my early work, I chose a dozen stories for collective publication. My credulity then received a shock. The great editor who had given me my first encouragement to write also gave me my first literary disappointment. I had sent the stories to him.

“My dear girl,” he advised, kindly, “if we published your short stories, book-sellers would ask, ‘Who is this author?’ Go and make yourself known! Get yourself talked

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about! Do something! Then we will gladly publish your stories in book form."

Another publisher gave similar advice. I was dazed but not daunted. What was I to do? How was a girl ambitious for literary recognition to get herself "talked about"? The easiest way, it may be suggested, would have been to produce a work of genius. But that method, unfortunately, is not a matter of mere volition—and I could not cater to the sensational. To have publishers make me known was my one chance of becoming known, and never did I doubt that this end would eventuate. At the same time, I cherished no illusions in regard to the stories. To me, they were the beginnings and not the end of achievement. These stories, however, were my children. I could not hawk them nakedly in the market place. Out of deference, therefore, to the publishers' advice and to my own inclination, I held them in abeyance until their day should arrive.

Soon after, the drama of life became personified for me and knocked at my door. I married and for five years led a life of almost ideal mental freedom. I wrote little; instead I studied to try to fit myself to become a

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writer. The lure of great books drew me and I dwelt with those writers who answered, as nearly as these mysteries may be answered, the baffling questions of life. It was a time of small output but of great spiritual profit and mental satisfaction. At the end of this period, when my children were born, I was maturely ready for them. I had not ceased to wish to produce books. I had come to recognize a greater creative privilege—that of contributing to society human documents to carry forward the march of ideas.

Through a happy force of circumstances I was able to keep the children from school for ten years thus enabling them to establish a friendship with out-of-doors, and to assist in the development of their individuality as I could not have assisted had I turned those early years over into alien hands. I do not recommend the method to all mothers. It was the only one to be considered for me. For me this work was the highest privilege of creation—the encouraging of the youthful imagination to flower. For the most part I was obliged to move blindly, owing again to the reticence of women in sharing the experiences of these

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formative years. For a brief hour a German governess taught the children rudimentary branches. But in books, music, pictures, sculpture, my children and I browsed together among these delights of living, educating each other—for always I felt that the children gave to me more than they could possibly receive.

In regard to writing, this period was almost entirely one of lying fallow. I did not possess the nervous energy necessary to be a mother-companion and a conscientious writer at the same time. “Art is a jealous mistress. It requires the whole man.” I could not energize as wife, mother, daughter, food specialist, social secretary, director of the commissariat and department of repairs, and bring any but a gasping effort to creative work. Other women, I knew, had accomplished this feat to my profound admiration. Perhaps they were not called upon to give themselves out in so many directions. Perhaps their gift did not require silence and solitude for its germination. As for me, I was seldom alone, or when my hour of daily quiet arrived, my mind was too tired to function.

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But, though these years were full of the creative ecstasy of motherhood, they never ceased to be a period of intense longing to write. Always I felt that I was beating time. Never was I conscious that I was fulfilling my complete destiny. This work of mothering an entire household had to be accomplished. It was my task. Assumed voluntarily, I performed it gladly. But the other work beckoned. Indeed, its insistent call was ever heard. Occasionally the longing expressed itself in a poem widely copied, or a short play gaining a professional hearing, to keep burning the fires of my faith. But for the most part I lived rather than reflected, I experienced rather than recorded my experiences of life.

When the children entered school and my mind was free I found that out of this deep experience of life and out of the temper of the time had grown the desire for a new order of expression. The forward movements of a revolutionary world alone interested me. I had become too alive to reality to become absorbed again in fiction. My children and their necessities had socialized me. Many books—wonderful books—had been written

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on feminism—the larger Motherhood—by childless women. My experience as a mother, and the rare privilege that I had enjoyed of living closely to my little ones' mental development, had given me an authoritative knowledge that I felt other mothers should share. I cannot say that deliberately I chose the woman's movement for my first serious book, for in reality the woman's movement chose me.

As soon as I determined to dedicate myself to human service rather than to "literary activities," life began to cooperate with me and make plain the way. The following summer I received a beautiful gift of three months' leisure in a country inn. Freed for the first time in years from material cares, living "on the branch" and fed, like the birds of the air, I knew not how, The Awakening of Woman flowed forth like lava from a long-smoldering volcano—my necessary transcript of life. The book once completed, I was again confronted with the problem of finding a publisher. To all purposes I was still "unknown." Where was the humanitarian who should believe in me and my task? To complicate the situation,

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war in Europe was declared. Civilization was too stunned to give ear to a new suppliant. War literature now flooded the market. My book was a spiritual adventure; works on material force, alone, seemed to challenge the eye. Before I had time to despair, life again took the helm. I was not forced to find a publisher. My publisher found me. The literary editor of a large publishing house wished a book on the woman question for his clientele. When I told him that mine was not the book that he sought, he differed with me and relieving me of all responsibility, he sent forth my first brain-child. To its author, the greatest satisfaction in its reception has lain in the fact that it has found its way not only into women's clubs and girls' schools, but also, as her mail testifies, into the more intimate citadel of women's hearts.

The hospitality of the public to the first book has led naturally to the publication of the stories. Though differing widely in subject-matter from the more serious effort, I find that the books are not dissimilar in purpose. Both works reflect creative thought running in divergent lines, but always

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toward the expression of truth and the better part of human nature. The experience of the years has only proved the verity of the stories' underlying principles. The tales are offered now as character sketches and studies for those who see and understand life as it is.

Were this story of the stories, however, merely the record of an individual, it might not be worth the telling. With opportunities for women constantly widening, the application of its truth is daily becoming more general. Not every woman may feel the impulse to create. But with ancient barriers crumbling, nearly every woman today hears the call to emerge into wider contacts. And not every woman is at once free to respond. Life may contain more urgent work for her. For such women there must still be found some honorable line of compromise between inclination and achievement, perhaps the pathway of the long patience. And to these women of deferred dreams I want to say, "Courage and forward!" It is never too late to give oneself to the great cause. My own thought on the matter of this struggle between desire and duty is that life must first be served and duty must

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not be aborted. At the same time it is more than ever important that personality be fostered and individuality cherished for that great constructive work that to-day challenges the creative energies of both men and women—the building of a new civilization that will be a more tolerable dwelling place for all.

How have other women compromised with life? Perhaps some day, when we women are less reticent in regard to our liberations, we shall know.

F. G. T.

55 Remsen Street, Brooklyn.

March, 1917.

GIVE MY LOVE TO MARIA¹

COURTRIGHT went quickly up the steps, looking at his watch, and touched the bell. Her brougham was standing in front of the door, and he knew that she would be ready.

She came downstairs in a plain, dark traveling gown, with the violets he had sent her pinned to her top-coat, and with a maid, bearing her satchel and umbrella, behind her.

"To the Forty-second Street Station," he said to the man on the box, and the sleek-looking cobs sprang forward.

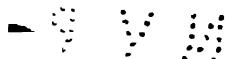
It was about a year since Courtright had first met Miss Schuyler. The acquaintance had begun on board a train bound for California, and they had become very good friends. The following winter found him a steady caller at the Schuyler domicile, yet in no way receiving preference above the other men who called quite as frequently, and who were also more or less enamoured of Miss Schuyler's healthy type of loveliness.

¹Prize story. Published in McClure's Magazine, under title of "With Madness in His Method." Title changed by permission.

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At least, if he was preferred, it was not made known, and he was treated with the same cordial frankness that characterized her manner toward all. Some one had once sagaciously remarked that Constance Schuyler could not be a flirt, for she was too much interested in every man she met; and perhaps the secret of her popularity lay in the fact that she was interested in people, which always flatters, and generally awakens interest in return. Courtright said she possessed adaptability in a very marked degree, and that it was that quality which enabled her to make friends with the oldest and cruestiest of bachelors, or with the youngest and most swaggering of college youths; and that with all her vivacity and high spirits there was an undercurrent of sympathetic womanliness that appealed to you; and he summed it up by saying that she was the most delightfully human and thoroughly lovable girl he had ever met.

In the absence from town of her father he had said that he wanted the privilege of escorting her to the station, and as they bowled along in the snug little brougham he told her that there was something else he wanted, and



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then repeated the sweet, ancient story in a manly, nineteenth-century fashion.

It was no novel recital to Constance Schuyler, yet she wondered why it had never before been so hard to say "No." But she said it very firmly and decidedly, for if she loved him now she had not found it out, and it was much better to tell him how sure she was, rather than to let him go on, deluding himself with the vain idea that some time she might grow fond of him. After her frank words, Courtright, looking out of the window, replied, meditatively:

"No, I should not want to hang around a woman for years, hoping that some day she might care for me, and bothering her about it. I should want her to come to me gladly, and because she wanted to, and I would not marry Venus herself unless she loved me." Then he looked at her critically, and continued, with delightful audacity: "I think I could marry you, though, if I did persevere, but I should always feel that perhaps you were not giving me your best love. It seems to me that that sort of thing ought to be spontaneous. I shouldn't care to be married to be gotten rid of."

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"But you believe that love is a gradual growth, don't you?" Constance asked, wishing in spite of herself to explore further into this partly known, but still fascinating territory.

"Not necessarily," he asked. "Do you remember the morning that I first saw you, going out to California? The train had stopped, and Peters and I got out to walk up and down the station. You came out of the car and stood on the platform, talking to some one below the steps. I heard you laugh, and looked up, and saw you standing there with your head a little thrown back, and your white teeth and dimples showing. I think I succumbed on the spot. I couldn't get you out of my thoughts, any way, and didn't rest until I had met you. It entailed two days of conversation on the general state of the country with your father, in the smoking car, and the consuming of no end of cigars, but I was rewarded at last."

Miss Schuyler laughed.

"And all the time poor father never suspected the deep scheme you were laying, and gave you no end of credit for being clever, because you listened to his views on the silver

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question and the tariff, and everything else he was interested in. He used to come back from the smoking car to mother and me, and tell us about the bright and original chap with whom he had been 'settling the affairs of the nation.' ”

She congratulated herself that she had steered the conversation off dangerous ground and that it had taken a less serious turn. Personalities, above all, she felt were to be avoided. But Courtright evidently did not agree with her, and plunged boldly in again.

“I saw something in your face that day, as you stood there, that I had never seen in any woman’s before. I don’t believe I could explain it to you”—as she looked at him inquiringly—“but”—coming down to what he could explain—“you know you’re an awfully fetching girl, and I think, even if I were married to you, I’d always be a little jealous. I used to want to make jelly of that young Whitney who tried to monopolize you in Pasadena. You’re the sort of girl”—continuing to analyze her as if she were not present—“that will always attract men, without effort. I suppose it’s magnetism, and be-

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sides”—turning and looking straight at her—“you’re so peachy, and so—so—ridiculously kissable”—ending with a half-apologetic laugh.

Constance Schuyler grew “peachier” and felt that she ought to frown, yet was conscious of a little exultant feeling within her, almost as if she were glad Courtright thought all those absurd things about her. But she said aloud she was very sorry he felt as he did, and that as long as he continued in the same frame of mind he must not come to see her, as it would hardly be fair for him, when she felt so very certain about herself. Then the carriage drew up in front of the big red station, and there was not time to answer this rather depressing remark. They passed through the crowded waiting-room out into the vast skeleton-like building beyond, and proceeded to “walk a mile” to the train.

Courtright thought of her last remark and made up his mind he would never adhere to it. He felt very downcast as he realized that he was giving her up, for a time at least, and that she was going to a place where, of course, every man there would want to marry her. He glanced down sidewise at her,

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thinking how sweet she was, and found that she too did not look particularly cheerful.

“Constance,” he said, quite low, “if this is the end, won’t you let me kiss you good-by—just once?”

Miss Schuyler almost stood still with astonishment and grew at least three inches taller.

“Certainly *not*,” she replied, in the most emphatic tones of which she was capable, looking at him so severely and with such utter consternation on her face that Courtright had to bite his lip and pull hard at his mustache to keep from smiling. She saw that he wanted to laugh, and felt that she had not succeeded in properly snubbing him. She went on indignantly, taking the first argument that came into her mind, and in which her conventional training and desire for appearances asserted itself:

“What a frantic idea! What would the people on the train think of you?”

“O, they wouldn’t think anything of it,” he said; and added, drolly, “I’d say ‘Give my love to Maria,’ or something like that, and then simply kiss you.”

It sounded so absurd that Constance

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laughed, in spite of herself, but had no fear. In her eyes it would have been a heinous crime, and Courtright, she knew, was a man to be trusted. Then the train made a feint of starting, and they ran a little for fear of losing it. There was but one chair vacant in the center of the car, holding out its arms to receive her, when they entered, and she dropped into it, panting a little.

“Good-by,” she said, looking up at him, and holding out a neat tan-gloved hand. “Good-by,” he answered, taking it in his own and holding it a second longer than was necessary; and then before she knew what he was about, he stooped, and saying, “Give my love to Maria!” lightly kissed her cheek.

It was only a very little kiss, and landed almost on her ear, just above the high fur collar of her coat, and was taken through one of the little dotted veils she generally wore, but it was enough to send the hot blood surging to her eyebrows, and to awaken indignation and rebellion within her.

He saw instantly the mistake he had made, and regretted bitterly the spirit of mischief that had prompted him to the act. She was leaving him in anger, and there was not time

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to prevent it. The train was puffing and catching its breath, as if to collect enough to propel it, and was already slowly moving. He glanced down at her pleadingly.

“You will send me your card, when you return?” he said.

“Never,” she replied, shortly, returning his glance with a look that contained fire and swords and other deadly weapons, and almost petrified him on the spot. He was obliged to leave the car or go with it, and he did the former, half dazed, realizing, as he stood on the platform watching the receding train, that he had gone a step too far. Of course she was hurt and insulted, and he called himself a cad, and other hard names, and said no penance would be too great for him. Then an idea came to his troubled brain, and, turning, he walked quickly back to put it into execution.

For one hour Miss Schuyler remained motionless in her chair, too stunned to move. That Courtright, of all men, should offer her such an affront, had almost taken her breath away. It not only outraged her inbred ideas of propriety, but destroyed every particle of her faith in men, and she told herself she

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could "never forgive him." She was still wearing her heavy coat in the warm car till she felt of her forehead and found that it was feverish, and that she herself was almost stifling. Slipping off the coat she hung it up, laying his violets scornfully on the windowsill. She would not wear them. Then she resumed her former position with her head on the back of the chair, repeating to herself, "How could he do it? How could he do it?"

The train was pulling into Stamford when a very small messenger boy boarded the car, calling, in a voice that was a credit to his size:

"Is Miss Schuyler here?"

Constance sprang to her feet. Her first thought was of home. Had her mother been taken suddenly ill, and had they sent for her? Or had her father met with one of those terrible accidents with which the papers abounded? A thousand awful possibilities flashed like meteors through her mind, as with trembling fingers she tore the envelope open.

"Regret exceedingly my conduct on train.—Courtright," were the words that met her frightened eyes. In the reaction that came she felt almost grateful to Courtright for

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having something for which to apologize. Then the impropriety and rudeness of it rushed back, and she hardened her heart against listening to his repentance. Of course he regretted it, she would give him credit for that, but the act had been altogether unpardonable. She repeated this to herself a great many times for fear she might forget it.

The train was now at Bridgeport, but she was hardly conscious that they were stopping until her reveries were suddenly broken by again hearing her name. A second blue-coated envoy stood at one end of the car, bawling, like the first, for "Miss Constance Schuyler!" With flaming cheeks she half rose and announced that she answered to that title, feeling that the eyes of every one in the car were fastened upon her, and wishing that Courtright was out of existence. What did he mean? she asked angrily. Had he not made her conspicuous enough for one day? What would these people say of her, to board a train with a man who had kissed her good-by and sent her telegrams at every station? And what was old Mr. De Peyster, who sat near her and was a political friend of her

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father's, thinking of her, as he lowered his paper and peered over his glasses at her, watching her open the yellow envelope? She glanced at it leisurely, knowing now that there was no cause for great alarm.

"I realize that it was rude and ungentlemanly.—C." she read.

Constance's lip curled with disdain as she thought that she too realized it, and she took a novel from her bag and tried to lose herself in it. But her mind, in its present volcanic state, refused to follow the placid path of the heroine, and would not concentrate itself. She kept her eyes on the open pages, preferring not to meet the inquisitive glances of those near her. She had never felt so uncomfortable, and blamed Courtright more than ever. The very car wheels were singing a monotonous song of which the refrain was: "Give my love to Maria—Give my love —to Maria," at any other time appealing to her sense of humor, but now only fanning her ire. But it was to rise yet higher, for at New Haven a third messenger entered and followed the example of his strong-lunged predecessors. It was the first time she had ever wished to disown the proud name of

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Schuyler, and she felt a further strong inclination to throw the telegram unopened out of the window. It proved to be a continuation of the other two, reading:

“And sincerely beg your pardon. Please answer.—Courtright.”

But she told the boy that there was no answer, and, signing the book, watched him depart, as he wondered what made the young lady's cheeks so red. There was no mistaking the fact that now she was an object of much more interest to the occupants of the car than the books and magazines they held. With one accord her traveling companions glanced curiously at her, and the young man with the checked clothes, who had stolen furtive glances before, now stared at her quite boldly, making her cheeks burn as if all the blood in her body had settled there. She thought her anger at Courtright had long since reached the boiling point, but it now bubbled over and effervesced. How dared he humiliate her so? She would give anything to escape those awful looks. Even the porter and the conductor were eyeing her suspiciously, conversing with heads together at one end of the car, she felt sure, about her.

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And when the latter moved toward her and stopped at her chair, she almost thought he had come to request her to leave; and so he had, but merely to the car in front, as she had taken a seat in the wrong one. She welcomed gladly any escape, and he helped to move her things. She glanced at the violets on the windowsill, hesitating about taking them. It was too bad to leave them there to fade, she told herself, and snatching them up hastily she followed the conductor.

She breathed a long sigh of relief when she was re-established in the preceding car, with her back to the "fresh" youth and his inquisitive neighbors.

When the train reached Hartford, Constance watched the door with anxious eyes, fearing to be confronted by a fourth telegraphic emissary, but was spared any further ordeal. The time from now on dragged wearily, and was spent in ringing the changes on the proceedings of the morning, and in bitter arraignment of Courtright for daring to kiss her, and for his inconsiderateness in sending her the telegrams. As she stepped off the train in Boston she felt that it had been the most uncomfortable journey she

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had ever taken, and that her visit in Boston was not commencing under the most auspicious of circumstances.

But after a busy week of rushing from one thing to another—recitals, lectures, teas, and symphonies, mornings with Browning and afternoons with Ibsen, Mental Science, Darwinian, and other clubs, with now and then a frivolous dance thrown in—she found to her surprise that Courtright still remained uppermost in her thoughts. Though his conduct yet awoke indignation, she was able to review it more calmly, and at length caught herself drawing comparisons between him and the men she now met, with the credit in his favor. She realized that he was a man of daring—one who would make his mark in the world by bold strokes—and was surprised to find how closely associated he was as well with the little things of her life. Her very umbrella suggested him, as she recalled the morning they had chanced to meet on Broadway, when Courtright was uptown buying a wedding present for some one, and had turned to walk with her. They were caught in the rain that soon fell, and he had rushed her into Gorham's for shelter, and had in-

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sisted on her choosing a pretty umbrella from the "affluence of selection" offered them, and she recalled how they had gone home together under it, in preference to taking a cab. It had been such fun, and she sighed to think that it was all over. Then she went back to that last morning, and found that out of the chaos of resentment that had then wrought such tumult in her soul one thing only now seemed to stand out clearly—Courtright loved her, and she had refused him, putting an end to all companionship whatever. She thought of the time when she would return home and would not see him, except to meet him occasionally at the big affairs to which they would both be invited. She thought of the walks and drives and box parties, that would continue, but at which he would be missing, and was surprised to find how unattractive they appeared. Other men would be ready to step into the breach, but could they fill his place, she asked herself? Whom did she know as bright and amusing as he? or as thoughtful and kind? or even as good-looking? she added, after exhausting all his other attributes. The idea of putting him out of her life entirely was so

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distasteful to her she resolved to think no more about it—a little way she had with things she considered unpleasant, and which proved that she was, in her fashion, something of a philosopher.

Two weeks after Miss Schuyler's arrival in Boston, Mrs. Mortimer Stanton gave one of her famous dinners. When all were established in their places she glanced around the mahogany board at her guests and the perfect appointments, drew a little sigh, breathing content, and said that "It is well." She eyed Constance critically, affirming she had never seen her look better, and admiring again that proud little poise of head, more noticeable now that the curves of her neck and shoulders could be seen. Young Searles, who sat on her right, and between whom and Constance Mrs. Stanton hoped to make a match, said that he had never seen a head so well set, and that the poise was "birdlike," and made no secret of his admiration of it. And although Miss Schuyler had accepted and found rather pleasant his devotion on her previous visit, and knew that the Searles's ancient family tree, and the golden

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apples that hung from it, were hers if she chose to but reach forth her hand for them, she felt a little wearied now by his constant chatter, and turned to the man on her left, who was new material, and, she hoped, more interesting. Since those repentant telegrams she had received no word from Courtright. To be sure, he did not know her address, but he might easily have obtained that, she said, of her father or mother, if he had really cared for it, and she almost regretted not having sent him some little reply.

The enlivening hum of conversation around the table was broken by Mr. Stanton, who glanced across at his young guest, and said:

“By the way, Constance, a rather mysterious episode occurred in the office to-day that concerned you.” The laughter and talk almost ceased.

“Some one called me up on the telephone, and said, ‘Is this Mr. Mortimer Stanton of — Beacon Street?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered. ‘Good,’ he said; ‘is Miss Schuyler visiting you?’ ” In the silence now the soft tread of the servants moving around the table was the only sound.

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“I asked him what he wished of you, but he said, ‘Oh, nothing, merely a package I have been commissioned to have delivered to her, and I wanted to make sure of her address.’ He was going to shut me off, but I told him to hold on a minute and tell me who he was. Then he said his identity didn’t make the slightest difference, as he was simply acting for another party.”

Miss Schuyler’s heart gave a bound, but she calmly reached for an olive.

“I pressed him still further,” Mr. Stanton went on, “and he replied, a little impatiently, that it wasn’t of the least importance, but that he was from the Treasury Department.”

Every one looked at Miss Schuyler to see if she could solve the riddle, but she laughed, and said that it was probably a joke. Young Searles suggested that “perhaps the package was bank notes,” and some one else asked if she couldn’t include them all in her “pull” in the Treasury Department? But in her heart she felt sure that Courtright was the “other party,” and that with the aid of a friend in Boston he was hunting her out. The package, she thought, might be bonbons or some conciliatory token, and she felt that

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in a few days she would hear from him; and the thought caused the dimples to break out around her mouth, and young Searles's conversation even to seem not so exhaustingly insipid.

She had wavered long between her strong inclination to forgive Courtright and the very just cause she felt she had to be angry with him. But she knew now, what she should do.

The next day, when Mr. Stanton's solemn-faced "inside man" knocked on her door, and silently presented a salver with a box upon it, she knew that her heart had told her truly. The box contained clusters of great double purple and white violets, and a note, with the inscription in Courtright's masculine hand. She tore the envelope open, letting it drop to the floor, while she read the contents almost breathlessly. He said that as she had not answered the telegram ("sent in serial form to see if I could not amuse you and take away from the seriousness of the situation"), nor written him even one line to say she forgave him, he supposed that she was still annoyed. And when he thought *why*, he blushed with shame at what he had done, and could say

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nothing in justification unless it was that their conversation in the brougham had made him not quite himself. And he sent her the violets, knowing she loved them, and hoped that they, in their sweetness, would plead for him better than he could for himself.

Miss Schuyler read the note through, then read it again, going over it as she used to a difficult page of her psychology, in her schoolgirl days, until she could almost have repeated it backward. She put the flowers in a cut-glass bowl, and set it among the silver things on her dressing-table. Then she went to find Mrs. Stanton, humming a snatch from the opera the Bostonians were singing, and told her that she really could not remain any longer than till Saturday.

The Van Houghtons gave a large reception in New York a few days after Miss Schuyler's return. Constance attended with her mother, and held quite a little court of people who said they were more than glad to see her at home again, and who asked the usual sarcastic questions about the Boston "savants." She chatted with them charmingly, listening all the while to the names

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announced at the door, and glancing occasionally in that direction. But midnight came, and Courtright had not appeared. She took an arm that was offered her, and moved slowly toward a small conservatory, for the moment vacant, while her escort went to bring her an ice. Her throat was parched, and she confessed to herself that the evening had not been a success. Then she buried her face in a cool bowl of roses standing near, half wishing that she were one of them. As she stooped there, some one moved swiftly across the floor, and a dark head almost touched hers on the other side, while a repentant voice inquired: "Did you give my love to Maria?"

Lifting her head, Constance saw Courtright standing before her, looking at her with twinkling eyes. Their expression was irresistible. She struggled with herself but a moment; then she threw back her head, and laughed as she had done when he first saw her in Colorado. When she stretched out her hand it was to put it in his, as she replied, "No—I didn't, but—I will."

THE FRENCH DOLL'S DOWRY¹

WHEN my husband admires a woman I always make it a point to cultivate her. Opposition only fans the flame which good-natured toleration blows gently out.

My husband is a physician who thinks that he knows women from A to Z. In reality, he does not know them from A to B. This, however, is his only weakness and is a harmless form of self-deception. So I allow the assumption to go unchallenged.

Our two children had become old enough to temporarily leave the parental nest. Placing them in reliable schools, we made plans for the fulfillment of our long-cherished dream—a somewhat belated, but wholly appreciated, European honeymoon.

After a Continental tour, enhanced by precious immature letters from America, we returned to London, where we had chosen to spend the last few weeks of our vacation.

One afternoon as we were walking down a corridor of the Hotel Cecil we were arrested

¹Prise story. Used by permission of The Black Cat.

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by an appealing exclamation. Turning to a small hall on the right, we found a young woman combating the predicament of having shut her train in the door. She was strikingly pretty, with blooming blonde loveliness. Her attractions were further heightened by an elegantly severe street suit, the perfection of the tailor's art.

The more the fair prisoner tried to extricate herself, the more the clinging cloth frock wrapped itself severely around her form. The pose might have served for that of a Greek statue brought suddenly to life.

Beauty was a shrine before which my husband always swung incense. Beauty in distress was an altar before which he fell upon willing knee.

“Permit me,” he exclaimed, springing forward to free the stranger.

“You are very kind, but it will not avail,” she rippled back, with an enchanting laugh. “I cannot be liberated unless we cut my gown. And I haven't the heart to cut so valued a friend. If you would be good enough to go to the office for a key (K 116), we will show this door who is master, and I shall be greatly the debtor to your courtesy.”

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Like Adonis at the command of Venus my husband flew for the lift. The imprisoned goddess swept me with a glance preliminary to the imposed tête-à-tête.

"I am interested in detecting nationalities," she said, with listlessly polite intonation, as if to fill in the delay. "Am I right in inferring that English is not yours?"

"Yes, we are Americans," I replied, with the pride of the Star-Spangled Banner in my voice.

Her indifference instantly vanished. Instead a look of intense interest illuminated her features.

"Then we are cousins!" she exclaimed, with a cordiality that the knowledge of my habitat had nowhere else aroused. "Blood-relations, in spite of poor, blundering King George. You are remaining in London some time?"

"No, only for about a month," I replied, more than gratified by her interest.

Her eyes seemed to interrogate me still further. Their complete absorption in my personality proved a form of flattery that my ego could not resist.

"We are leaving for lodgings in Kensington-

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ton Road," I obeyed. "My husband thought that their quiet would be pleasanter than the unrest of a hotel."

At that moment the doctor returned with a key. He slipped it into the spring lock and in a second the prisoner was again tasting the sweets of liberty.

"May I not have the pleasure of remembering the name of my emancipator?" she inquired, giving my husband a smile that would have warmed the heart of a stone image.

"Certainly," he said, reaching for his card-case, the embodiment of a delighted masculine acquiescence. After a few more civilities we left.

"What a beautiful woman!" my husband exclaimed, as we drove through a London labyrinth of vehicles.

"What a clever one!" I returned. "In five minutes she had my past, present and future! As for us, we did not even secure her name. She looks like the women who make or mar history. Hers, I am sure, is not the feminine chronology of lived, married, and died. Why did she take such an interest in us when she found that we were Americans? And

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wasn't it rather strange that she asked so many questions about people whom she never again expected to see?"

My husband laughed and advised me not to look for underlying motives. Suspicion, he said, sapped the foundation of social intercourse. I must take people, as he did, for what they appeared to be.

But I could not drive this unusual woman from my thoughts. Before we left London I felt that she would again sweep into our orbit. This feeling was so strong that, two days later, when I met her coming up the garden walk, followed by a maid and a cabman bearing her luggage, I exhibited no surprise. I felt only greater faith in my own intuitions. Her surprise at seeing me seemed complete and found vent in delighted ejaculations.

"Mrs. Atherton," she exclaimed, holding out both hands. "*Quelle chance!* Have I chosen the vine and fig tree that shelters you and the gallant doctor?"

Something within me—a possible sixth sense—told me that she was falsifying. Not only had she known that she was coming to our lodgings, but for some inexplicable rea-

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son *she had followed us there*. From the porter who had sent our trunks she might easily have procured our address.

My distrust, which before had germinated, blossomed now into full growth.

When I mentioned my conjectures to my husband he scouted them. It was true that I commanded no argument either logical or fair. I was certain that this woman was untrustworthy. But I could offer only the feminine reason that her eyes were set too near together and that I trusted my instinct—that thing some one has said that a woman feels when she is wrong.

The doctor was, of course, delighted at the “coincidence” of our second meeting. Up to this time there had been thirty-six women whom my husband had affirmed were the Creator’s masterpieces. Mrs. Delenbar, I saw, was destined to be the thirty-seventh and to surpass all the others. The favorite was sure to be the one who could answer “present” to the roll call. This attitude did not alarm me. I had learned that my husband was a lover of all womankind, but was in love with one only.

Burying my suspicions, I adopted my

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usual cue and let my friendship follow where my husband's admiration lingered.

The next morning we found Mrs. Delenbar's superior knowledge of London at our service. After that hardly a day passed without an excursion of three to a place of historic interest, an informal dinner, or visit to the play.

Soon the fact became apparent that designs upon my husband was not Mrs. Delenbar's motive for cultivating us. Her attention to his wife was even more marked. But she could not disarm my original disquietude. Some day this woman would use us. Why else had she followed us? We were people of moderate income. Little had we to attract a person of Mrs. Delenbar's brilliancy and wealth. I resolved to be as gracious as my conscience would permit while, like a detective, I watched her every initiative.

One morning we invited her to go to the shops and to luncheon afterward. Unlike her usual custom, she declined. She had letters to write, she said, and did not intend to go out.

Our wanderings led us at noon to a small curio shop just off the Strand. Its sign told

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us that relics of South Africa were to be found within. Oom Paul had issued his famous ultimatum. The indignant British Lion was even then roaring a declination of the terms, without thanks. We wished to secure some souvenirs of the Dark Continent to commemorate our presence in London at the nativity of such portentous events.

When we entered the store I stood still in amazement. In the shadowy rear of the long, low room stood Mrs. Delenbar, exchanging papers with a short, swarthy man.

I turned to my husband.

“Look!” I said quickly. But when we turned again, the back of the shop was vacant. The lady and her strange companion had withdrawn into another room.

“You were mistaken, of course,” my husband asserted. “Mrs. Delenbar distinctly said that she would not leave the house.”

I did not attempt to convince him, but was confident that I could trust my own vision. The man with whom she had been earnestly talking had borne the unreal, opera comique air of foreigners. He might have impersonated any role from an ambassador to a pirate. The interrogation in my mind was what part

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he played in the drama of Mrs. Delenbar's life.

When we again met she did not refer to her outing. She assumed—perhaps she believed—that we had not seen her.

I was now confident that all in her life was not open. Who was she? What had she to conceal? Whence came those lovely gowns and jewels? Where was Mr. Delenbar, and why was she traveling alone and unattached?

A few days later an incident occurred confirming my own and awakening even my husband's misgivings.

We had returned from a visit to the National Gallery, where Mrs. Delenbar had kindly introduced us to the kings and queens. We were taking tea in a room on the ground floor. From it we could see the tiny garden, high brick wall, and passing vehicles.

I had noticed that in any public room Mrs. Delenbar never sat with her back to the door. Her alert eyes seemed ever watchful. Suddenly I saw them darken. If escape had been possible, I am sure that she would have fled.

From her vantage seat she had observed a hansom draw up at the gate. I looked out

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and saw a tall, bronze-faced man of distinguished carriage mount the villa steps.

“Mrs. Delenbar! What fortune!” he exclaimed, going toward her with the delighted air of one who renews a valued acquaintance. “How strange that you should be the last English person to bid me adieu in South Africa and the first to greet me in Kensington Road! Why did you conceal the fact that you were so soon to follow? Did the certainty of war rob West Griqualand of its charms?”

Mrs. Delenbar was as flatteringly cordial to him as she was to all of masculine gender. She asked permission to present Mr. Everard, and he and my husband were soon engaged in a conversation as to the pros and cons of the coming war.

Almost immediately Mrs. Delenbar withdrew. She was not seen again for many days. Her maid said she was ill and obliged to keep quietly within her room. This statement I took the liberty of doubting.

I had now, at last, something tangible upon which to base suspicion. For three weeks this woman had been constantly with us, yet never once had she mentioned having

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visited the land whose name was upon every tongue—the land from whence, it now appeared, she had just returned. This was doubly striking, since she had talked freely of her travels. Her varied experiences, retentive memory, and reminiscences of distinguished people whom she had met made her the most entertaining of companions. Why had she been silent concerning her visit to the Boers? Why had she secretly visited the little South African store? Why did she wish to avoid Mr. Everard and sham illness to keep out of his way? These were questions which my husband hoped that Mrs. Delenbar would plausibly answer. But the explanation would have to be more than plausible to satisfy me.

From Mr. Everard I could learn nothing of enlightening interest. He had known her only as we had—as a charming woman, possessing the rare combination of beauty and brains.

He was an Englishman, a cattle breeder in the Orange Free State, near the border of West Griqualand. Mrs. Delenbar had visited his ostrich farm with some people of social standing. He had afterward met her

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at their home. Her interest in the ostriches had been so intense and childlike that he had named a young bird of particularly fine plumage after her. She had plainly captivated him, as she had my husband. His home was on a platte, however, away from the towns. His opportunity for seeing her had therefore been slight.

With Mr. Everard's departure Mrs. Delenbar's illness, as I foresaw, took a decided turn for the better. She reappeared looking rosier than ever and with the anticipated story at her tongue's end.

"I feel that I can trust you and the discreet doctor," she sighed, with her pretty air of unenlightening frankness. A gold vinaigrette with an amethyst top was in her hand. This, cleverly applied, stimulated sympathy by producing an effect of semi-invalidism, or at least interesting convalescence. Mentally she was very much troubled, she said. And this was the explanation of her unrest to which she treated us:

She had an elder and much-loved brother. At present this brother was in the small African republic which was challenging the attention of the giant nations of the world.

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A man of large wealth, she said, he fostered peculiar ideas of dispensing it. In fact, he was a socialist. His ambition was the chimera of bringing universal democracy to the earth. This social treason against his inherited aristocratic proclivities was laid like a blight at the doors of Ruskin and Carlyle.

Now, the Transvaal, or to dignify it with its constitutional name, the South African Republic, represents in one respect, as every one who cares for such uninteresting items knows, the most ideal democracy ever formed: every white man within its borders has not only a vote, but receives a homestead of three thousand acres from the public lands. Her brother, believing in this governmental distribution, had gone to the Transvaal to study its patriarchal form of rule. His acquaintance with them had aroused strong sympathy for the Boers. Pity had then led him to embrace their cause and to offer not only his wealth but his life.

That one of her own blood should bear arms against England and her dear queen was more than Mrs. Delenbar could endure. To try to dissuade him from this rashness she had made a secret pilgrimage to South

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Africa. At least, the visit had been kept a secret from her English friends. For, as we plainly could see, in case of an outbreak, she preferred to have it unknown that one of her ancient, blue-tinged blood had joined forces with those ignorant, unreasonable Boers.

My husband drank in this story as does a lamb its mother's milk. Having lived three weeks in London, he felt that he understood the English character to the marrow. Mrs. Delenbar, he said, embodied its pride, its loyalty to tradition and to the throne. No one should learn from him of her anxiety or well-established occasion for grief.

As for me, I did not credit a word of the story. Try as I might, however, I could not surprise Mrs. Delenbar into one contradictory statement.

I felt baffled, but not convinced. The next day I stumbled upon a clew which at once became a key to the conduct of my lovely enigma.

In my presence she received a registered package with a foreign stamp. Through a mistake the parcel was brought first to me. I detected "West Griqualand" on the post-mark. I could not read the name of the

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town, however, as Mrs. Delenbar's voice rang out sharply:

"I think the package is for me." Then, recovering her usual tone, she murmured, "My poor brother!" But she did not open the parcel until she was alone.

Now, she had told us that Johannesburg, in the Transvaal, was her brother's headquarters. Here was a discrepancy—although, of course, her brother might be traveling about. Then, like an inspiration, the truth flashed over me—this was an official communication. *Mrs. Delenbar was a governmental spy.*

I had heard of the beautiful Nihilists and feminine emissaries of the Russian diplomatic corps. Even in our own country had we not our much-vaunted secret service? In Europe, the land of intrigues, where courts slept with arms folded upon down-turned bayonets; where the wolf of war was silenced only by a diet of costly armament; where diplomats fawned, that they might not frighten, and distrust was the policy that paradoxically maintained confidence, woman's wit was of value. By its aid secrets might be secured which would determine an

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empire's policy. And who better fitted to ferret out information than the fertile-minded Mrs. Delenbar? Without awakening his suspicions had she not extracted the doctor's history from Genesis to Revelation? And had she not drained me also, deliberately on the defensive, of all that she wished to know?

Her secret visit to the South African curio shop and strange silence concerning her trip to Africa were now intelligible. What the spy theory failed to explain was the question in which I felt deepest interest—why had she left the Hotel Cecil to pursue an intimacy with an American doctor and his wife?

I did not inform my husband of my deductions. He was once more thoroughly under the spell of Mrs. Delenbar's charm and would only have upbraided me.

We were about to leave London and our baffling acquaintance. The discussion was therefore one which seemed profitless to pursue.

Miss Delenbar's grief at parting from us appeared genuine. Perhaps my husband's perfect faith touched her. She was aware of my distrust, I was sure, and respected me for

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it. I knew too that she congratulated herself upon the cleverness with which she thought that she had thwarted me.

When the final good-bys were said she gave us many assurances that she would certainly accept our kind hospitality (my husband's) when she came to New York. She then inquired casually the best method of sending a small parcel to America.

She had a French doll, she said, for the birthday of a little namesake—the child of the American friends whom she had told us that she dearly loved. She had dressed the doll with her own hands and would not have the little one disappointed.

Of course my husband volunteered to carry the keepsake. After many protestations she consented to burden us with it.

The "small parcel" proved to be a box nearly three feet long. It was about twelve inches wide and occupied a lion's share of my husband's Gladstone.

When she opened the box a new and fascinating side of her nature was revealed. Its contents proved to be a beautiful French doll dressed in the daintiest of bridal attire. With almost maternal pride she showed us

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its nainsook and real lace *lingerie*, every stitch of which, she affirmed, had been made by her own hands. When had she found time to accomplish this work? I could not restrain the thought that her maid might have enlightened me. Like a mother she guided my finger to a spring in the doll's chest. A light pressure caused it to emit a species of "Jabberwock" supposed to be "Mama" and "Papa." She also tilted its body up and down that it might open and shut its blue eyes.

"The little girl for whom it is intended has blue eyes," she said. "She has clustering curls also, and the *ensemble* of a Raphael cherub. Only not the wings. Far from it! She is very human and very naughty at times."

When we were again alone my husband turned with an air of firm persuasion toward me.

"Now, Alice, will you abandon your suspicions? A woman who loves children as Mrs. Delenbar does cannot be far from right. I have been more annoyed than I cared to acknowledge. It is unlike you to distrust a lovely woman, whose only crime is that she

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has not introduced us to a husband—above or below the sod."

I did not reply. I was more than a little chagrined to board the steamer with my engaging mystery unsolved. For the power of the woman's attraction had drawn me singularly to her. I liked her while I doubted her. My study of her character had revealed many lovable, womanly qualities running counter to those that repelled. Something in her eyes told me that ambition had not satisfied her; that at times she envied me my quiet life and contentment. I felt sure that whatever the secret she covered, the power of circumstances called Fate had drawn her into it. If she used people, she was in turn the tool of her masters—unscrupulous politicians, I believed—who enlisted a clever woman to do the unclean work with which they refused to soil their hands. The first false step had probably been an unfortunate marriage. She was fond of children, and they had been denied her. Her beauty and intelligence had then become the reef upon which she had foundered.

When we arrived on board the Oceanic we found some acquaintances from New York.

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At home we had only a bowing interest in them. We greeted them now with the irrepressible effusiveness one feels toward even casually familiar faces when met where familiar faces are rare. A common conversational ground was established by comparing experiences as to places we had visited and people we had met. The third day out Mrs. Delenbar's name was mentioned.

"It was our good fortune to meet her also," Mrs. White exclaimed. "She stopped a week, a short time ago, at Mentone, on the Riviera. She has all the gifts of the gods, has she not?"

A discussion of Mrs. Delenbar ensued, the men full of admiration and we women of curiosity concerning the bewildering stranger.

"She has friends in America from whom some day we may hope to hear her history," Mrs. White volunteered. "She is sending them a keepsake by me."

I stiffened with interest.

"It isn't—for a namesake, is it?" I inquired, with a nervous laugh.

"Yes. How did you know?" she answered.

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"Is it," I gasped, "*a French doll?*"

"Yes," my friend again returned, completely mystified, while the gentlemen listened in dazed silence. "She dressed it entirely herself."

For a moment the blue of the ocean became indistinct and blurred.

"Is the namesake like—a Raphael cherub?" I asked.

"Yes, all but the wings," Mrs. White replied. "She is human and very naughty at times."

I dared not look at my husband. My thoughts were traveling faster than electricity could carry them. Instead of leaving my enigma behind I had brought it with me! I fell back limply in my chair.

"What does it mean?" asked the now thoroughly perplexed Mrs. White.

"It means that I too have a doll," I said, weakly, "from Mrs. Delenbar—to a namesake—a Raphael cherub—without the wings!" Then I found presence of mind to inquire, "She did not know that you were to return on the Oceanic?"

"No; when we saw her we had expected to sail from Genoa. A cable from the firm

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brought Mr. White unexpectedly to London."

Mr. White tugged at his moustache.

"It may be all right," he muttered, "but it looks confoundedly queer."

My husband's face was troubled and pale.

"One course alone will settle suspicion," he said, gravely. "The dolls must tell the story. I move that we appoint Mrs. White and my wife as a coroner's inquest to hold a post-mortem on the young ladies. Meantime, until we know that they hold a secret, let us judge not."

I loved him for this last sentence and for the genuine pain I knew that he suffered at the thought of a gentlewoman's downfall.

"Yes," I returned, softly, "we will 'suspend judgment' until we have absolute proof."

But the Whites could not put the subject away. Not having entertained suspicions of Mrs. Delenbar, they were much stirred by the sudden turn of affairs.

"Have you any theory as to what the dolls are likely to divulge?" Mr. White asked.

"I have," I replied. "I believe that they contain papers bearing secret information in

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regard to the situation in South Africa. My opinion is that our lovely friend is a British spy."

Mr. White gave a low exclamation. My husband made a deprecating gesture while he looked at the distant horizon.

"In that case we have no right to read the papers," Mr. White said.

"Nevertheless, I intend to know the true inwardness of my doll," I replied. "To be a spy is pardonable. To involve us in such a network of lies places the lady beyond our sympathy. Mrs. White, there is no time like the present. Will you descend, while the gentlemen wait for us, and help me dissect the demoiselle? If our suspicions are groundless, we have a surgeon present," glancing at my husband, "who will take a few stitches and restore her to society."

For my husband's sake I made light of the occasion. But my heart was pounding like a piston.

My steamer trunk was soon pulled forward in my cabin. Its flat surface offered an impromptu operating table. The doll was extracted from her tissue-paper bed and stripped to her white glove-kid skin. I

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armed myself with some sharp-pointed scissors. Seating myself on the floor I braced my back against the bunk to resist the ship's motion. Then the autopsy began.

A body artery—an under-arm seam—was selected. Slowly I ripped each stitch. When an opening of three inches was effected I inserted a finger and worked it in the bran. Resistance nowhere met my effort. The doll's body was as free from foreign substances as was my husband's mind from guile.

To say that I was disappointed would be to acknowledge that I was predetermined to find Mrs. Delenbar guilty. I was disappointed that she had again circumvented me. Each leg and arm was in turn examined, alike fruitlessly. I had succeeded only in sprinkling my stateroom with bran.

Mrs. White began to grow frightened.

“You have ruined the doll!” she exclaimed. “What will you do? Mrs. Delenbar will hear that you did not deliver it.”

“Buy another one, of course, just the size of this one,” I replied, dejectedly.

The situation seemed inexplicable. Yet I felt that I must be “warm,” as the children

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say when the searcher approaches a hidden object. The solution must be at hand.

"Why did she send two dolls," I mused, "by two women whom she believed would not meet, to two namesakes, each answering the description of the other?"

"I don't know," Mrs. White returned, plaintively. "It looks strange, but we have plainly wronged her."

"I can't believe it," I replied, decisively. "If there is any truth in the psychic, then I'm certain that instead she has wronged us."

I picked up the doll's head. It was made of the usual composition, exquisitely colored and set upon shoulders dimpled and plump. I turned it upside down. Then I made a discovery.

"It ought to be hollow," I asserted, examining it closely. "This one has been sealed in the small of the neck."

My inquiring mind when a child had insisted that I should "see the wheels go 'round" in all toys. An experienced eye told me that all was not legitimate with this flax-covered head.

Then an inspiration came to me.

"Stand aside!" I commanded. Mrs.

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White was too dismayed to do anything but obey.

Holding the head aloft in my hand I threw it with all my force upon the trunk. It fell in fragments. Then from out of a mass of soft paper rolled numerous gleaming stones—yellow and sparkling white.

“Diamonds!” ejaculated Mrs. White.

“A smuggler!” I exclaimed under my breath.

At my request Mrs. White flew to her stateroom and secured her doll. Again an operation, this time beginning at decapitation, took place.

Once more the priceless stones rolled over the stateroom floor. Accompanying each head was a paper with a list of its precious freight—so many “straw-colored” diamonds, so many “off-colors,” and so many “pure-whites.” Each stone, also, was given its carat weight.

I prefer to drop the veil on the scene when my husband heard of our discovery. In all truth, however, I think I can say that he felt no more regret than I. To a spy who imperils all in the interest of his country, we could give our affection and even respect. If

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he lose his life for a cause, immortal laurels are his. But a smuggler! A trickster who works for private gain! We wisely concluded to drop Mrs. Delenbar from our conversation and thoughts.

The diamonds were sent anonymously to the governmental authorities. Through the addresses on the "keepsakes" we might have traced the American accomplices. But we would not hound them or an erring woman to a cell.

Forces not so kindly as ours, however, were fermenting against her. Soon after our arrival, in an English paper I read the following extract. It was copied from the *Kimberley Daily Advertiser*:

A DAINTY DIAMOND THIEF

KIMBERLEY, May 24.—The annual diamond sensation is with us. This time, to lend variety to the old story, a beautiful woman of aristocratic connections is associated with the fraud.

Every one knows of the precautions against theft taken by the owners of the "Bulfontein," "Kimberley," "De Beers" and other mines. Yet, in spite of the thorough searching each evening of the Kaffirs who work in the mines—eyelids lifted and tongues drawn out—in spite of the fact that many of the mine owners compel the men to live in the company's "compounds" while the blue clay is being worked, it is estimated that one third of the diamonds are stolen each year. The Kaffirs dispose of the stones to the "I. D. B.'s" (Illicit Diamond Buyers), who in turn sell them at a large advance on the original purchase price.

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The account then narrated the tale of a man—an apparent gentleman—who had long carried on an illicit traffic on a large scale. The medium through which he disposed of the gems was a lovely woman who had visited Kimberley each year. This woman had been secretly warned of the exposure and had successfully disappeared. It was known that at the time she had been living in London. She was a blonde, and it was supposed that she had colored her hair and taken passage as a maid for the United States.

I did not intend to show my husband this article. But he had come quietly into the room, and finding me so completely absorbed in thought had insisted upon knowing the occasion.

“I hope that we do not chance to meet her, Lansing,” I said when he had read the extract.

“Because you would feel compelled to give her to the authorities?” he asked.

“No; because I should feel compelled to befriend her. She is the most magnetic woman I have ever met.”

His eyes rested softly on me. I knew he

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was grateful to hear that I would console rather than condemn.

“I want you to tell me what first led you to suspect Mrs. Delenbar?” he asked, plunging his hands into his pockets as he paced the floor.

“Her eyes were set too near together,” I smilingly replied.

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YOUNG Ludwig, Baron of Saxony, stood on the stern deck of an ocean liner and watched his past recede. Behind him were his traditions, his training, his early associations; his family with its ancient castles, its empty coffers, its aristocratic delusions, its pathetic attempts to grasp and retain a feudalism already extinct. Before him lay America, its Goddess of Liberty holding the scroll of his future in her firm, strong hands.

Ludwig did not deceive himself as to that future. He knew that, younger son though he was, he was the modern straw at which the expiring family pride collectively clutched. His elder brother was hopelessly invalidated. The title and mantle of dignity must some time descend upon the younger son's well-set shoulders. Affairs were still conducted upon a subtle, medieval, rather than an open, twentieth-century basis, in Saxony. Yet Ludwig understood the occasion for his trip

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to America quite as well as if it had been indelicately discussed. They hoped it would be a "mission," even as his ancestors had assumed crusades. They trusted that he would fill the family exchequer after the ancient and approved custom of honorable gentlemen—he was to marry money. Vulgarly speaking, which in Saxony was modernly speaking, he was expected to charm and entrap a million-dollar princess. Would he do it? He looked over the foaming white wake etched by the vessel through a sea, now green, now blue, and told himself that it depended. It depended upon the girl. If she wished for a fair exchange—he shrugged his shoulders. He would sacrifice himself to the family pride. He would bury his hopes. But he would not pretend to a passion he did not feel. Far out on the horizon flitted the girlish ghosts of his youthful fancies. Mockingly they seemed to wave a farewell of white hands to him. His eyes shot out long-distance, good-humored smiles in return. He felt a sense of confusion, almost of disloyalty, at realizing how cheerfully he left those airy figures. The real woman, the woman for whom a man would fight with every inch of

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his manhood, had not yet challenged him. The Great Experience, before which all others become dwarfed, had not arrived. And if it should? His jaws came together firmly. His shoulders lifted. He came of generations of men who had died fighting for their ladies. He would be true to the instincts of his race.

He checked himself here with a skeptical shrug. Experiences such as he had dreamed of did not fall to many. About him he saw harassed humanity, bravely making the best of counterfeit affinities in lieu of genuine. The poetry, the fine aroma and essence of life, was probably not for him. He must console himself with the prose of an American princess. At least the binding would be beautiful. His critical taste would discriminate as to that. Yet how little recompense, he thought, in possessing an edition de luxe in covers when—his humor asserted itself—the pages within came to mean “Paradise Lost.”

He began to stroll the deck. Doubtless there were million-dollar princesses on board among the human freight. With a half scorn of his quest and a whole-hearted interest in

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the new scenes ahead, he let his gaze fall politely, almost flatteringly, on the forms in the steamer chairs. He encircled the deck without seeing a face that invited a second scrutiny. In no eye did the spark of life beckon. Boredom was written on those not frankly given over to slumber. If he could have discovered only one face, man or woman, to whom life was a thing to be lived, the great and exciting adventure, he would have found some way of opening communications. If he found any interest expressed, any interrogation, it was a weary "How long? How long must we endure each other and this daily, deadly, rolling monotony, before we reach terra firma?"

The shouts of children at play on the deck below arrested him. He leaned on the railing and overlooked the travelers of the second class. He saw that the shrill voices came not from children but from dwarfed men and women. He remembered that on the boat was a troop of midgets who were to appear in a spectacle in New York. Their antics amused him. He lingered by the rail. They seemed to be looking excitedly in one direction. He followed their eyes. Down

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the deck, at full speed, a girl was running. After her came two men midgets. In the stern the little company of dwarfs watching the race jumped up and down. "Come on! Come on! Come on!" they cried in a southern European patois. On the girl flew. Ludwig could see her face now. Her cheeks were flushed. Her eyes smiled. She was enjoying to the full every ounce of energy she was expending. Here was some one who was really living! Before he realized what he was doing Ludwig was leaning over the railing cheering to hearten her, "Hasten, Mademoiselle, hasten! See! They are gaining on you!"

The girl heard the voice. Without looking up, she quickened her speed. A few yards more, and amid the delighted screeches of the little people, she touched the goal. Then she sank breathless upon a bench, the midgets swarming around her.

"Hide once more!" they pleaded. "Play hide-and-seek once more." She raised her eyes to the first-class passenger deck and met Ludwig's amused glance. Then she shook her head at the dwarfs and motioned with her hands for them to disperse. Ludwig, fear-

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ing that his presence embarrassed her, lifted his hat and left the rail.

When he had left the scene he could not tell whether or not the girl was pretty. Animation had been uppermost in her face. He remembered only a slender blue serge figure flying down the deck as not many girls could run, with the fresh, unspoiled joy of living radiating from her as she ran.

“I’d like to paint her as a modern *Atlanta*,” he said. Like most foreigners trained to be non-useful, he had dabbled in art. “I’d—I’d like to race with her myself.” Then he turned into the reading room, and was soon lost to present events.

The next day, after wandering around idly all the morning, Ludwig was drawn, almost against his will, to the rail overlooking the second-class deck. The girl was there. She was reading to some American children. Her face looked grave now. He pronounced her interesting rather than pretty. He began to wish vaguely that she would be interesting, or might become interested—in him. Would she never look up? He wanted some sign of recognition from her. Just then she raised her eyes and for the space of a second

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met his glance directly. But, without the slightest indication of ever having seen him before, her eyes swept over him and wandered out to sea. He was not even an adjunct of the marine view! Her interest in him, as a human being, even after his interest of yesterday, was clearly nil. This was a novel experience. In Ludwig's little kingdom he had been a kind of Ahasuerus to whom every Esther only waited the lifting of his scepter to approach. He laughingly admitted that he liked this new attitude. He supposed it was American independence. And it spurred him on to attempt to conquer it.

The next morning he purloined a few lumps of sugar and went below to the second-class deck. The ponies used by the dwarfs in the New York performance were housed in the bow. As a means to an end he meant to cultivate the dwarfs. Only a few first-class passengers developed sufficient energy to see the ponies. The Italian stable boy was alone with them, save for a woman and one dwarf. Ludwig recognized the graceful figure. It was Atalanta! He was afraid she might think that he had followed her.

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But it was plain that she was not thinking of him at all. She was making the rounds of the ponies with her small escort, and was absorbed in reciprocating courtesies as he solemnly introduced her to each small horse.

“This my ponee Babette,” Pedro explained, stopping by a rotund little animal. “I ride heem—in show. Babette, smart, Babette do tricks. But have care, Mademoiselle. Babette jealous. Babette ugly.”

As he spoke Babette pointed her ears, rolled her eyes till they showed red, and snapped savagely at the girl’s arm. Quick as a flash, something forced Babette’s head upward and held it firmly, while a voice of authority said: “Steady, Babette! Steady, girl!” For a moment the pony struggled, as Ludwig rose over her, still holding her by the mane, gazing steadily into her eyes. Gradually the pointed ears relaxed. Slowly the red disappeared from the eyes. Retaining his hold with one hand, Ludwig reached for a lump of sugar with the other. Babette ate the lump greedily and whinnied for more. Ludwig laughed boyishly, patting her face.

“Shake hands, Babette, and I’ll give you more sugar.” Babette hesitated. “Shake

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hands," the man who had mastered her insisted. Slowly the pony lifted a small hoof and put it daintily in Ludwig's palm.

"Good girl!" he said, shaking the hoof heartily and rewarding Babette with a second lump. "Nice Babette!" as the velvet nose rubbed his arm.

"You show-rider? You do trick?" asked the midget who had watched the scene in wonder. Ludwig smiled.

"No show-rider. Do tricks—a little—in army. Like horses—that's all."

The girl came slowly forward.

"I am greatly indebted to you," she said, simply. "Babette meant mischief. She was jealous of Pedro's friendship for me." She smiled her thanks and turned to go.

"Must you go?" Ludwig found himself saying. "Won't you and Pedro tell me about the ponies? They are so clever. They seem so jolly a lot."

Pedro, finding a sympathetic listener, slipped his hand fraternally into the blond giant's who had so wonderfully tamed Babette, and led Ludwig around the stalls, giving a dramatic account of the virtues and failings of each horse. The girl accompanied

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them. She had that unconscious poise of manner—or was it absence of manner?—that seemed to stamp what she did as naturally right.

The following day Ludwig again sought the lower deck, this time without subterfuge. He had seen Atalanta seated alone on a bench, her dark, uncovered head bending over a book. He felt curious to learn if her spoken word would fulfil the prophecy of her magnetic personality.

“May I join you a moment?” he asked, standing with head bared. His manner contained the well-born European compound of reverence and admiration toward women. Atalanta made room for him on the bench.

“Every one is so beastly bored above. There’s no real enjoyment on the ship—except among the midgets.”

“Would you like to play ‘prisoners’ base’ with them?” she asked, demurely.

“Immensely. But not now. Is it presumption to inquire what you are reading so intently?”

She grasped the slender volume lightly.

“One of my favorite poets,” she replied.

“Jolly place to read poetry out here,” let-

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ting his gaze wander over the unspoiled stretches of sea and sky. "Almost could write it." He looked at her quizzically. "If you don't let me see the book I shall think—that it isn't poetry."

She surrendered the flexible volume defensively. He leaned forward, opening the pages between his knees.

"Isaiah! You must pardon me," instantly returning the book and again raising his hat.

"Do not apologize. You feel, I suppose, as if you had surprised me at my prayers."

Ludwig smiled.

"I wonder," said the girl, looking at the horizon musingly, "why we attach so much privacy to reading a book that is frankly the most secular and helpful ever written?"

Ludwig looked at her inquiringly.

"Do you find it—all that?"

"Yes. It's so universal. There is something for every one—for every problem we face."

"I wish that I could find something for mine," he said, half in earnest. He was thinking of his intuitions and blessing them. When people looked interesting they were interesting.

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“Let me try for you,” she said, smiling, and opening the volume. She was delightfully girlish, Ludwig thought, when she smiled.

“This is what I was reading when you came. It may not be personal. See if it is not modern.”

She read from Isaiah slowly:

“In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and the bats!”

The color left Ludwig’s cheek.

“Have you cast your idols—of gold—to the moles and the bats?” he asked.

She hesitated, then let her eyes meet his bravely.

“Yes—though I have to watch that I don’t make other idols.”

A flood of crimson dyed his face as he recalled his mission in America. “Idols of gold which they made each one for himself to worship!” What would this girl say if she knew his errand? A wave of shame swept over him. He removed his cap to let the breeze play on his head. The sunrays burnished his head with gold.

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“Will you tell me something about New York?” he asked, at last.

“Oh, New York is all ‘Idols of Gold,’ ” she replied, good-humoredly. “That is why people swarm there. They like to see the shimmer and glitter and hear the clink. At the entrance of the Park you will see a statue of gold. It used to grate upon me. Now I see that it fits into its setting. Modern Midases roll by it. Everything they touch turns to gold. Beautiful women pass, all hard and metallic with gilding. For gowns they wear cloth of gold.”

“Then it is the land of the dollar?”

“For the men, yes. It’s a land of accumulation, of slavery for them, of dollar drudgery. ‘Lay not up for yourself treasure upon earth,’ has no meaning in America. It’s what every American strains every nerve to do. He has no time left, nor strength, to accumulate any real treasure.”

“And what might that be?” he asked, leaning forward.

“You Europeans know. It’s a wide interest—a broad culture. It’s—its largely what makes our American girls like you foreigners, you know.”

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Ludwig felt curiously treated. Surely, this American girl was frank and impersonal. Her tone implied a total lack of consciousness that she too was an American girl, or that he was a European. She spoke like a simple, direct boy, frankly and without the slightest affectation.

“Tell me more of New York’s idols.”

“You’ll see them everywhere,” she continued, whimsically. “The gold standard flaunts itself. You’ll be shown piles of offensive architecture, and told how many millions they cost. You’ll be asked to admire a portrait of one of our social leaders, and learn that she is hung with a million dollars’ worth of jewels. You’ll be taken to the opera house and told how many billions the diamond horseshoe of boxes represents. You’ll listen to our tenor and hear whispered that he is wonderful: he receives twenty-five hundred dollars a night.”

There was no bitterness in her tone. It was rather good-natured raillery. Yet Ludwig felt sure that here was a girl whose family had been part of this glitter, but whom the wheel of fortune had treated adversely. Atalanta was poor, yet radiantly

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poor. Poverty simply whetted her interest in life.

“Have you no idols?” he could not resist interrogating.

“Perhaps I call mine ideals,” she replied. When she spoke again it was with passionate interest.

“Yes. I have idols. Humanity—the people are my idols. There is no happiness, no rest, for me until there is happiness and rest for them. I work among the people. I know their condition. I want idols of gold and silver for every one. Can’t you see that they would not be idols if every one had them? We would create a new set of values for life.”

A new set of values for life! The words cut through Ludwig’s soul like a plow through yielding soil. He arose and went to the rail. When he returned he said, “I am afraid that my idols have not been even of silver and gold. They seem suddenly made of clay.” He reseated himself, clasping his arms around the back of the bench. “What would you say if I told you that I’ve lived for a quarter of a century, and never earned a dollar in my life?”

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"I should say—how refreshing! At least your soul has not been commercialized."

She arose and excused herself. In a moment more she had gone.

That night Ludwig's stateroom seemed cramped. His mood demanded open spaces and the canopy of the stars on the boat deck. He was filled with interrogations. He questioned what his sense of exultant harmony meant. Had he met the Great Experience, met the embodied personality that could lay barely a finger upon his sleeping self and say, "Awaken! Live!" If he had, she was this penniless girl, traveling second-class and alone on the steamer that was to take him to meet an heiress bride.

In the week that followed sometimes he remained away from the lower deck. More often he obeyed the overmastering impulse that led him to her side. Sometimes she seemed to avoid him, although she was without concealment. In their talks she revealed that she was a settlement worker, with a salary. Both her parents were alive. Whatever their station, Ludwig felt that they must be gentlefolk. Atalanta had that dignified reserve and a certain freedom of cordiality,

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that are rarely united except in those of assured birth.

Sometimes he led her to talk seriously of life and its purposes; of the service she believed so passionately was required of each, while Ludwig imbibed "a new set of values." Sometimes they played and romped with Pedro and the other midgets, with whom he had become the best of friends. A few times they sat in silence on starlit evenings, while Ludwig bit his lip to keep back the words he felt should not be uttered. The girl's sanity, her freedom from the coquetry of the women to whom he had been accustomed, helped him. He was conscious that marriage was not the paramount issue of life to her. She was the only woman he had ever met who was in love with a Great Idea—an idea of serving others.

Often she told him stories of the Settlement, the amusing side of the children's attitude toward her, as shown in brilliant gifts of paper roses, or subtle attempts to duplicate crudely her simple gowns. Sometimes she told of the sodden, colorless lives of the parents; of flashes of genius in children with no opportunity to fan the spark; of childish

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figures, whitefaced and pinched, exploited in workshops, with no future but soul-destroying toil—like that of their parents. He even found himself longing to help her, longing for power to transform his idle park and forests into wealth that he might pour at her feet to do with as she chose.

They were sitting on deck the evening before landing as the boat lay at quarantine. Nearby, the lights of Coney Island twinkled in the shape of elephants, revolving wheels and towers. To both, the fantastic forms seemed to characterize the civilization to which they were returning. Ludwig realized that he had spent the most significant week of his life, and wondered if it meant anything to her.

“You will let me call upon you to-morrow evening, Atalanta?” he asked. It was only a form. He intended to go. Hitherto she had met his earnest entrenchment on the personal with a smile that acted as a gentle, restraining hand holding him with a firm “not yet.” But she did not smile to-night.

Moved by a sudden impulse, he said: “You know why I want to come, Atalanta? I must meet your people.”

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“Wait,” she urged. “Wait a week—a month, till you have seen America.”

“You do not mean that,” he said quietly. “You know that waiting would not signify. The men of our house know their own minds. I have been patient. It was not easy. I have respected your position. I must see you in your own home to-morrow night.”

She looked at his set face with its seal of determination, and with a woman’s soft pride on her own, said: “Come, then, to-morrow night.”

The next evening he went. He lived through the day, getting his luggage out of the customs and settling himself in a sky-scraping hostelry which had been recommended. He ate a solitary dinner to a distracting musical accompaniment in the palm room. But it is doubtful if he saw the young women who eyed openly the distinguished stranger with the foreign air.

He called a motor and gave the chauffeur the address she had given him. He wore evening clothes, as he had evenings on the steamer when he sought the lower deck, with a military cape thrown over them.

The motor stopped at a house similar to

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others in a block. He rang the door-bell. A man in livery responded.

“My man seems to have made a mistake,” Ludwig said shortly. “This is not No. —, East Eighty-seventh Street, is it—the home of Miss Montrose?”

“That’s our number, sir, but no such person lives here.”

Ludwig consulted the address. It was certainly the one she had given him. He had been silently repeating it all day.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, turning away stiffly. He did not wish the man to see the depth of his disappointment.

“Wait a moment!” A voice that Ludwig could not mistake sounded over the footman’s shoulder.

Behind the man stood Atalanta. He hardly knew her. A long, white gown accentuated her slenderness, leaving her arms and throat bare. Ludwig stepped back as if caught in a steel trap. A quick, mad sense of having been fooled swept over him. He felt like beating a retreat.

“Jennings will take your hat,” the girl said, quietly. Her eyes commanded him. He surrendered his wraps to the man, and

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followed her into the long drawing room. Soft lights cast a mellow glow over antique rugs and beautiful pictures. Above the girl's head his eye took in a masterpiece known the world over. His brows contracted.

"Are you—visiting here?" he queried.

Before she had time to reply two people came from the vista of an adjoining room. The man was tall, with a bright, nervous glance and an imperious, alert manner. His face looked strangely familiar. The woman was small, and moved slowly as if conscious of her weight of jewels. From diamond tiara to glittering shoe buckles she sparkled—all except her eyes. They looked world-worn and weary.

"I want you to meet my parents. They are leaving for the opera," the girl said.

Ludwig went through the conventions of an introduction in some way. He had a vague recollection of the man, in a kind, businesslike manner, offering to put him up at the club; of the woman thanking him for having helped break the tedium of a voyage for her daughter, and hoping to have the pleasure of his company at dinner the following night.

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When the front door had closed behind them Ludwig strode to the girl.

“What game is this? Has the last week been merely a farce for you? Why have you been masquerading? Why aren’t you what you appeared to be? Aren’t you real?”

The girl threw back her head and looked at him fearlessly.

“Yes, I am real.”

“Yet *this* is your home?” His eyes wandered again over the marbles and priceless porcelains scattered about.

“It is my father’s home,” she corrected.

“Idols of gold!” he quoted, scornfully. “Why, the place reeks of them!” He checked an unpleasant laugh. “I would better bid you good evening.”

She placed herself between him and the door.

“I could not tell you on shipboard,” her voice delayed him. Her head drooped. “I could not spoil—that perfect week. It was all true what I told you. I am a settlement worker. I live with the workers on the East Side. This is not my home. It is only the accidental place where I stayed before I knew what was worth while.”

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“And your father’s name?” he asked half dazed.

“Is Wallace Cunningham. Yes, the railroad king. I’m not proud of his title, nor of his fortune. I know too well the system under which it was built.”

Wallace Cunningham! Ludwig knew now why the man’s face was familiar. He had seen it often in public prints, not only as a railroad magnate, but as a philanthropist and connoisseur of art.

He sank upon a divan and covered his face with his hands. The girl came near and spoke rapidly.

“My father and I think differently about life. But he is fair. He lets me live in my own way. I don’t belong here. I nearly stifle in these surroundings. There is no prosperity, no rest for me while I know of the life of this city below. I had always longed to travel second-class with the people I care for. The opportunity came suddenly, ten days ago. The friends who were to cross with me failed me. My father had engaged my stateroom. One thousand dollars was the price. We needed about that sum,” her voice faltered, “for some work at the settlement.

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The captain knew me, knew my father. I persuaded him to make the change in state-rooms, and give me the money. All the way he watched over me, kept my secret. To avoid publicity, I took my mother's name. When I saw your—your interest, I couldn't tell you the truth. There had been a procession of men who had cared for me—for my father's sake. I could not undeceive one who seemed to care for my own."

He removed his hands. His face looked haggard and years older.

"You don't understand," he said, wearily. "I can't speak now."

Her eyes searched his.

"It isn't a pleasant confession, but you'll have to know it. I came to America to marry—something like this." His hands indicated the surroundings. "I came seeking 'Idols of Gold.' "

"I divined it," she said, quietly. "When the captain told me of your name, your people, my intuitions told me the truth. You would have sacrificed yourself for your people. But you threw your idols overboard when you went to the railing of the steamer that first day that we talked."

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“Thank you,” he said, simply. “I think I did.” He arose slowly.

“Will you excuse me now? I must adjust myself.”

“Wait,” she replied. “Do not go until I return.”

She went swiftly upstairs. A maid removed the shimmering gown and brought her the blue serge of the steamer. In a few minutes, arrayed for the street, she returned to the drawing room.

A gleam of gladness came into Ludwig's eyes when he saw her.

“Atalanta!” he breathed, involuntarily. She went straight up to him. Her eyes glowed softly with the highness of her resolution.

“Every word that I spoke on the steamer was true. This is not my real home. But you had to see it. You had to see the place I had evolved from—left behind. I want you to know my real home—my work, my comrades. The car is waiting to take me back. Will you come?”

“Do you mean that?”

“Yes, but that's not all,” she said, softly. “It isn't often a woman asks a man to lead

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her life. Yet if the life-work is big enough for two, she can. I couldn't live as your wife must live—in a toy kingdom. I couldn't spend my days flitting around a toy throne. Up to a few days ago, I had expected to live my life—do my work—alone. The man who follows me must be great enough to lose his life—to live and work with me, here."

"Will you let me try?" he eagerly asked. Her eyes shone with pride in him. In another moment he had taken her in his arms. When at last they moved toward the door they were laughing like children to hide the mist that dimmed their eyes.

"Let's pretend we are motoring around the deck of the steamer," she said as they ran down the steps.

"We'll have Pedro for best man," he replied.

"To the Settlement," she told the chauffeur.

Ludwig handed her into the limousine and followed, still retaining her hand.

"To the new life," he said as the car glided through the glare of Fifth Avenue toward the darkness of the East Side.

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IN matrimonial circles the Rittingfords enjoyed the distinction of a somewhat isolated success. Wherever they went they left a hum of admiration behind, for though married eight years they still secretly preferred to be neighbors at dinners; and between the acts at the play they could furnish mutual entertainment without resort to the programme jokes.

Two children, variously known as "the blessed torments," "the chicks," "the ewe lambs," completed the charm of the Rittingford home. They were azure-eyed, with sunny hair and that amazing other-world loveliness known as cherubic. The "morning-glories" was their latest denomination, originating in a habit of unfolding their petals outrageously early and bursting full-blown upon the elder Rittingfords, where they clamored to be taken up to climb over the parental vine.

The most frequent visitor at the Rittingford house was Ira Mitchell, who bore the

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marks of professional brokerage as distinctly as the clergy does its cloth. One felt that his proper setting was a club window, and that he never walked if a taxi were within sight. He was calm in excitement, loyal in friendship, and parted with his money with a facility equal only to that with which he made it.

The younger morning-glory, though but three years in bloom, wore on her fat little finger a diamond chip given her by Ira, and unblushingly announcing that it was her “’gagement ring,” and that she was going to marry Uncle Ira and her father when she grew up.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the stock market phenomenally inflated and the brokers reaping a harvest such as falls to their lot perhaps once in a score of years.

“I wish that there was something to make besides money,” Ira announced, smilingly seating himself at dinner with the Ritting-fords, and pulling his geometrically creased trousers up at the knee.

“O, this is the ‘Golden Age’ for you people on ‘Change of course,’ ” Leroy replied.

“The brokers are all riding uptown in han-

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soms," Ira continued. "Hansom cars are an unfailing barometer of Wall Street prosperity. When the market slumps the men take the cars. Three million shares of stock were sold yesterday as against five hundred thousand one year ago."

"What has caused the 'boom,' Ira?" Mrs. Rittingford asked, turning her slow, Rosetti smile on Ira's enthusiasm. Mrs. Rittingford possessed that tall, graceful slenderness that falls naturally into stained-glass attitudes. Her husband called her his "Blessed Damozel."

"Confidence and prosperity," Ira replied. "The rise began after election and you can't stop it. Talk about games of chance! Why, a corner grocery is a gamble compared to the purchase now of stocks. You can almost buy with your eyes shut. It's like being a prestidigitator and picking off dollars from everything in sight."

Enid remained silent but secretly writhed under this eulogy of the Street, for she fore-saw its ultimate effect upon Leroy. Mrs. Rittingford was endowed with that genius, none the less great because seldom accredited, of understanding people. She knew

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that nearly every man has an elemental love of hazarding upon a venture; also that for some time her husband had been charmed by that bee which in games of chance buzzes so alluringly until one has been stung and had to nurse the wound. Leroy was in the manufacturing business. Every dollar of his ample income was paid for with a pound of energy if not a pound of flesh. Whatever surplus arose he reinvested in the firm to which his uncle had admitted him to partnership. Under present conditions Enid knew, and Leroy knew, that he could no more afford to buy stocks upon a margin than he could afford to buy them outright.

But the next morning at breakfast her pre-science was established when Leroy lowered his paper and said:

"I think that I'll take a little 'flyer' in stocks myself, Enid. It seems almost like criminal negligence to turn down an opportunity that's so sure. I could buy five hundred shares of Erie Preferred. I know something about the wheels within wheels of the railroads, we transport so much over them. The Erie and C. B. & Q. are to make a deal which is sure to send the stock up. It's

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a dividend payer now. We might pull out twenty points, easily, I think."

"But what would you buy it with?" Enid asked, trying to teach the youngest morning-glory the ethics of fork and spoon.

"I could take part of our country house fund. In a few weeks we would make more than we could save in as many years. We might even break ground in the spring. You see, to buy fifty thousand dollars' worth of stock requires a margin of but five thousand dollars. At twenty points we would double our investment."

Enid's face reflected her feelings. Like most women, she was a bad loser. Wall Street, to her mind, was a maelstrom that sucked in tribute and left one standing, empty-handed, with a dizzy sensation on the shore.

Leroy laughed and went over to her.

"You don't approve of my 'flyer,' do you?" he asked

"Making money so easily seems immoral, doesn't it? Besides," lowering her attitude ethically, "I'm afraid. You know how Wall Street involved my inheritance. I'm the burnt child that dreads the fire."

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“Then advise me to keep out of it.”

“But you know that I never advise you,” she protested.

“Yes, I know,” he replied. “That’s probably the reason why you always have your own way. But council me now.”

“Very well,” she laughed. “If you really want a country house for yourselves and the bairns, I advise you to give Wall Street a wide berth.”

He turned away satisfied, but she took his hand.

“Leroy,” she said, twisting his ring, a little embarrassed as she always was when she spoke of her deep feelings, “if you are dissatisfied—if it is on my account that you wish to make more money—don’t try it! You are so used to my cheerfulness you hardly realize how—how deliciously happy I am.” Here Leroy interrupted her, but she emerged and resumed. “When I hear other women talking of this ‘world of troubles’ I agree with them through pure shame of confessing how cloudless my horizon is. I’d rather have the patrimony you are sure of than all the fortunes Ira is likely to make—and lose. No one has any money in Wall Street until he

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gets out with it. An income is not just dollars and cents you know; it's plus one's blessings. Computed spiritually, I'm the Croesus of the world."

Leroy looked at her with tender yet reluctant eyes, and said that her prejudice should be his safeguard. But before noon, the voice of the siren ticker, aided by that primeval impulse, had again tempted him, and he bought five hundred shares of Erie Preferred!

Did Enid remonstrate? No. Philosophy told her that financially Leroy must work out his own salvation. That the money would be lost she did not doubt. Leroy must buy his experience at the world-wide usurious rate.

A period of dread anxiety followed. Try as she would to school herself, Enid could not restrain an overwhelming interest in Erie Preferred. The nightly greeting of Leroy changed from "How are the youngsters?" to "Well, we took a rise out of Erie to-day," announced jocosely; or "Erie went off a point or two," given with assumed nonchalance. The silent inquiry of her eyes challenged him. Her temperature fluctuated with the stock. At night she could hardly

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wait for Leroy to enter the house so strong was her impulse to lean out of the window and demand the latest stock quotations as her husband came up the street.

For more depended upon this venture than was at first apparent. Leroy's uncle, to whom he was heir, strenuously objected to what he termed "this iniquitous form of evil." Not realizing how a younger mind chafes at a suggestion even of the curb, he insisted upon his views with elderly pertinacity and was quite capable of disinheriting his nephew for defying them. For Enid herself this fiat held no terrors. But when she thought of the ewe lambs being deprived of one penny of inheritance, maternal solicitude—that most jealous yet justifiable of sentiments—sent her into an agony of unrest.

Aside from maternal promptings she was devotedly attached to Leroy's uncle and had no wish to wound him. He was no Scrooge, tight-fisted and tartaric. Instead he was a charming benevolent old gentleman, childless, but nearly groveling in his allegiance to her little people. Shrewd, far-seeing, combining much worldly wisdom with many heavenly practices, Enid could never be quite

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sure whether his antipathy to speculation was due to the danger involved to capital or conscience, but she suspected that it was both.

“What would your uncle say if he knew that you had speculated and won?” she asked Leroy.

“He would say that he would rather I had lost twenty thousand dollars than make two.”

“Then win or lose,” she replied, “I don’t see but that the gibbet dangles before us in any case.”

But at last Erie Preferred steadily spread its wings. Up, up it soared, two—four—ten—twenty-five points. Enid’s veins now ran fire—the speculator’s fever. But Leroy only laughed and would not sell. Then the stock dropped slowly but surely, while Enid’s blood congealed again, for, as she said, it was harder to lose the promised land when once you’ve sighted it.

“We can’t lose, my dear,” her husband admonished. “I’ve put a stop order on to sell if it goes back to our twenty points.” But she was not to be comforted. She felt that in ways that are dark and tricks that are vain Wall Street outdistanced any yellow-skinned Celestial.

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At last one day the telephone rang with a crisper, merrier sound. "Good news—good news," it proclaimed. Mrs. Rittingford flew to the receiver.

"Go down to Union Square and order a boom tiara," Leroy's voice greeted her.

"What?" she gasped.

"Buy cobweb-lace for the morning-glories," he continued.

"Leroy, is this paresis?" she asked.

"No, it's profit mania. Just sold out Erie Preferred with ten thousand dollars on our side of the ledger."

"*Leroy!*" Enid ejaculated, with all the concentrated surprise she knew that he expected of her.

Just then the doorbell rang and Leroy's uncle entered. Enid placed the receiver on the shelf, trembling, and hurried him to the nursery, where the children introduced him to a miniature railroad track with cars that would "go." Carefully shutting all doors after her, she returned in a cold perspiration to the 'phone, where she told Leroy of her fright.

"Don't invite him to dinner—I've asked Ira to drop in and celebrate."

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“We’ll keep out of Wall Street now, won’t we, Leroy?” she asked half laughing, half crying at their dazzling success.

“Of course. I’ll occupy that unique niche in history left vacant for the man who wins in Wall Street and retires.”

For two weeks he occupied the niche. Then, as might have been expected, he returned to the throngs of Wall Street, where he was soon even more deeply involved.

Again Ira was indirectly responsible. The Rittingfords were taking a midnight supper with him, after the play one evening, in a palm garden, the flower of hotel evolution.

A portion of the profits of Wall Street adorned Mrs. Rittingford in the shape of a string of pearls and a gray crêpe dinner gown that heightened her Pre-Raphaelite charm.

“I bought one thousand shares of Petroleum to-day,” Ira announced cutting into his anchovy toast. His voice, always short and crisp, rang with disturbing confidence. “I expect to hold it and let it simmer, then skim off as much cream as I did in Southern Atlantic.”

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Leroy's ears pointed. He recalled the recent excitement of watching Ira's flirtations with that stock, buying and selling, coqueting with it as it fluctuated, until in the face of all warnings Ira had loaded up heavily and held on until—though the truth savors of fiction—he sold out with a clean profit of two hundred thousand dollars.

Of course Ira was often "nipped," as he expressed it. Previous to the Rittingfords' début in Wall Street whenever he had beamingly announced "I made seven thousand dollars to-day in St. Paul," or "I pulled out twenty-five hundred dollars over night in Amalgamated Brass," Mrs. Rittingford had maintained an average by cheerfully demanding, "Now tell us how much you have lost?" And he usually frankly confessed, though claiming all the while that a bull or a bear market was equally to his advantage as he could turn a profit by buying or selling at will.

"Have you inside information about Petroleum?" Leroy asked.

"Yes—from one of our big customers, whom, of course, I can't quote. It's two hundred and fifteen now, and I am told will

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reach three hundred. You see it's bound to be a good thing because the moneyed men are manipulating it. When you travel with the Right People, you know, you get into the drawing-room car. The stockholders are to have a meeting at which a melon is to be cut; then you'll see that stock throw out ballast and soar. And your Uncle Rufus will have both hands in the car and no weights on his feet either."

Enid smiled at Leroy and read his thoughts.

"Perhaps I'd better be a Mercury myself about that time," she was not surprised to hear him say.

"It's very high-priced," Ira cautioned.

"O, of course I couldn't buy more than a few seeds," he replied, and Enid hoped that the matter was dropped. But did she really hope it? Was she not blinded by the brilliancy of this second opportunity? With customary honesty she confessed that scruples became less scrupulous when the bank account begins to swell.

"What do you think of buying Petroleum?" Leroy asked as they bowled along home.

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“Well, you know that I don’t approve of Wall Street,” she replied, weakly.

“It’s so high I couldn’t buy more than two hundred and fifty shares. Still, if it goes up eighty points we’d net twenty thousand dollars.

“It won’t,” she argued, making a dash for her principles. “No stock ever does.” Then with her lips she tried to dissuade him. But in her heart she knew that she hoped he would overrule her objections and buy.

A week passed while Petroleum soared and Leroy chafed because he had not “gotten on board.” It was almost a relief—like a duty performed—when he came home one night and said: “I telephoned Ira to buy me two hundred and fifty of Petroleum to-day.”

With this second venture Mrs. Rittingford’s equilibrium was not disturbed. Her confidence in Leroy and Ira asserted that no market could gain the better of this double team of geniuses. She no longer besought Leroy for the tape’s record. With the coolness of an old plunger she appropriated the evening paper and read the magic column herself. And each evening Petroleum showed the lucky +.

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One afternoon she had just finished giving the final orders for a dinner at which Leroy's uncle and their minister and his wife were to be the unusual guests and was preparing to storm several "at homes" that constituted what Leroy termed "the Thursday rampage." The morning-glories were in the back yard, nearly submerged under a pile of white sand.

As the clock struck four a latch key in the front door announced the unprecedented arrival, at that hour, of the master of the house. One look at his face, white with the pallor of shock, told Enid how deeply he was agitated.

"What is it?" she asked, breathlessly.

"A panic in Wall Street," he replied coming toward her, a newspaper extra in his hand. "The worst in twenty years."

"Has Ira—gone under?" she managed to articulate.

"No, thank God! I just telephoned him. They've tided it over so far and hope to pull through. The bottom fell out of everything; not a stock but dropped from twenty to sixty points."

Enid swallowed hard.

"What did—Petroleum do?"

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“Only dropped thirty-five points!” Leroy replied.

“Then — we’ve lost — everything — and more?” she asked, ambiguously, taking hold of a chair.

“Indeed not!” And how his voice put new strength into her!

“What can we do?”

“Hold on like Lucifer until Petroleum goes up again!”

Does anything appeal more strongly to a woman than masculine initiative and determination? Mrs. Rittingford’s admiration for her husband’s stamina at this overwhelming turn of affairs overflowed all limits.

“We may have to put up a little more margin,” he continued. “It will be hard to raise, but I’ll get it in some way rather than lose that stock.”

“Tell me about it,” she said, and dropping into a chair, he told her briefly the history of the memorable Blue Thursday in Wall Street.

“Ira’s stock, Southern Atlantic, made the trouble,” he began. “It broke all records in the history of trading and touched one thousand. If Ira had held on he would have

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made millions. Of course a jump of hundreds of points in twenty minutes was bound to disturb the whole market, and perfectly sound stocks fell accordingly."

"But what caused the panic?" she asked, still mystified.

"It was a battle of the giants for the control of Southern Atlantic," he replied. "The 'shorts' had to have it at any price, throwing all else overboard, so the stock jumped with the unprecedented demand for it. Do you see?"

"Yes-s," she answered slowly, trying to digest this abridged explanation of a Wall Street corner.

"There were few failures of firms," Leroy continued, "but thousands of men and women—tempted to make money quickly, as we were—have been financially wiped out. There were sickening scenes at the Stock Exchange. Women drove up and fainted when they heard the news; gray-haired men staggered away overcome by it. You see, dear, it means beggary for multitudes. We are fortunate that it does not mean ruin for the midgets and for us."

Beggary is a potent term. Mrs. Ritting-

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ford needed its alchemy to eat the corrosion from her principles, restore her vision, and renew her moral poise.

"And what of the men who planned this condition of affairs?" she asked, icily.

"O they remained in distant offices and ordered the screws to be tightened."

"Vampires!" Mrs. Rittingford burst forth.

"Trade is brutal of course. Wall Street has no soul. The ruin of 'shorts' meant increased wealth for the Titans. So they forced the price up higher."

Mrs. Rittingford had a flash-light view of the whole hideous game. She saw the scene in perspective and understood as she had never understood before. Brilliant money kings—philanthropists, even, outside of Wall Street—moved their pawns on the chess board of finance and held themselves clean-skirted and irresponsible if greedy little men bet on the result. Mrs. Rittingford's sense of moral obliquity became normal. Wall Street could not buy her virtue or tempt her to deviation again.

"I'm glad that the Hunts are coming to-night," she said. "It will be diversion." Then she gave a little shudder. "O Leroy,

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what would that saintly minister say if he knew?"

Leroy moved uneasily.

"We'll give him a slice of our profit for the Y. M. C. A.," he replied. "I'd rather have him know than Uncle Wilmot."

"If they are mind readers, they may both discover it to-night," she said, rising wearily.

Leroy stood in front of her and detained her. Her eyes were nearly level with his.

"This news is not to spoil your evening, Enid," he said firmly. "I believe that money is as safe as if it were in the bank. We hold one of the strongest stocks in the market. It's simply a question of staying powers, and you are not to worry. Do you understand?"

So, reassured, she prepared to spend a tolerable if not a buoyant evening when almost simultaneously with the appearance of Uncle Wilmot and the Hunts a most unexpected crisis arose.

They were seated in the drawing room in that trying pre-prandial state when, under the enforced hum of conversation, hostess and guests alike are wondering why dinner is not announced. Mrs. Hunt sat high-necked in a straight-backed chair. Enid had

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dropped onto some Turkish cushions with easy grace, her neck and arms gleaming above a thin black gown. Dr. Hunt occupied a divan with Leroy, his warm animated manner mitigating the severity of an almost austerely spiritual face. Uncle Wilmot encroached on only part of his chair near Enid, stout, ruddy, white-haired and ferret-eyed.

Instead of dinner, the crisis was served in the shape of a yellow envelope which a maid presented to Leroy. He read the message, and folding the paper continued his conversation with Dr. Hunt as to the advisability of a church gymnasium.

Telegrams were infrequent at the Rittingford's, and this one, following the events of the day, was too pregnant with possibilities for Enid's overwrought nerves.

"May I see the despatch, Leroy?" she asked. Then she murmured an apology about fearing bad news from home.

Leroy hesitated a moment, then handed her the slip. "Will require ten thousand dollars additional margin by morning. Mitchell & Irwin," was what she read.

Mrs. Rittingford's thoroughbred instincts prevented any outward display of

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emotion. But inwardly she felt swept by a hot wind which left her withered and dry. Ruin seemed to stare in dancing letters before her—ruin for the precious bairns. Under the circumstances, to ask Leroy to produce ten thousand dollars in twelve hours was as practical as to raise one million in a minute. She dared not look at her husband, fearing that their glances might betray them. Uncle Wilmot's keen eyes were watching her. In an instant she drew on the actress element that is latent in every woman—at least at critical times. Crushing the paper in her hand she gave a little laugh, like a sigh of relief, and dragging her sparkling draperies slowly across the floor she threw the crumpled ball into a Chinese vase. Then she said:

“Uncle Wilmot, will you give your arm to Mrs. Hunt? Don't you all feel like the famished bears in the Zoo?”

Leroy shot a smile of approval at her which she understood as if he had given her a caress. Dr. Hunt said grace. Then, with that scrap of paper as a killing appetizer, they began a delicious dinner which only three were conscious that they ate.

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“Well, I see that the gamblers have had another terrible lesson in Wall Street,” Dr. Hunt commenced.

“Serves them right, serves them right,” Uncle Wilmot replied, promptly. “I have no sympathy for the fools who throw money into that cesspool.”

Enid steered the conversation to less dangerous fields. Yet underneath the ball which she as hostess must keep rolling flashed the constant question, “By what miracle can we raise ten thousand dollars to-night?” Leroy’s presence of mind, aided by the benefits of a long conventional training, inserted “indeeds?” and “that’s very interesting,” at intelligent intervals. But his subconscious mind was searching all possible channels for raising revenue and acknowledging that they were discouragingly dry.

For three laggard hours they played their difficult roles, then in all sincerity sped the parting guests.

When the front door closed Enid dropped lifelessly onto a sofa and let the forced smile of the evening fade from her aching features.

“What shall we do?” she asked.

Leroy wiped his brow.

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“Well, we can qualify for star positions at the Garrick after this evening, if the worst comes to the worst,” he replied. Then he buried his hands in his pockets and walked the floor.

“Did you expect this telegram?” Enid asked with closed eyes.

“No, but I should have known that the brokers would need more margin. I was a dolt not to have thought of it this afternoon. Ira’s firm probably sent a despatch to each of its customers. It meant being swamped if they had to stand the loss above the margins put up.”

Mrs. Rittingford then secretly forgave Ira for making demands on them. The telegram had seemed distinctly unfriendly before.

“Of course plenty of men would lend me the money. But one hates to risk other people’s capital in panicky times.”

“Yes, it’s like shooting the Rapids in a barrel and asking a friend to sit on top.”

“I have securities enough to raise the amount, but Uncle Wilmot holds the key to the strong box.”

“Uncle Wilmot must not know,” Enid said, suddenly becoming animated. “He

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would never forgive you. I would do anything to keep it from him."

"Would you really?" Leroy said, looking at her curiously.

"Yes."

"How much money have you in the bank?"

"Four thousand dollars," she replied.

"Will you give me a check for it?" he asked.

"Yes." The money was all that she had.

"I can take it to Ira in the morning and scrape together the other six in some way before noon."

They went upstairs to the library, where she took out her check book and filled in a blank. As she signed her name she suddenly realized the world's countless unwritten dramas, each day holding a miniature life. How often a pen stroke involved not only a wife's fortune but her shattered destiny—her broken heart! She thanked God that she was not signing away her happiness as she gave the check to Leroy. Mere money could not wreck her.

"I never felt like quite such a yellow dog before," he said as he put the slip in his pocket book. "I can see now how little right

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I had to go into Wall Street and involve you as well as myself. Speculating is an indulgence for coupon cutters. But I want to tell you this: when we get out with a whole skin and a fat profit, as I believe we surely will, this four thousand dollars with one half of our winnings will be put back in your name."

Then, after the reef was passed, she broke down and cried, a happy, overstrained woman, strong in her very weakness, knowing that her six-foot husband was also seventy-two inches of tenderness and that he would comfort her as he did the youngest morning-glory when she bruised her small thumb.

The next morning the check was dispatched to Ira with the promise of more later. But before noon a telephone message from Ira's office told Leroy that the amount would be sufficient as money had come in from unexpected sources.

"It's an evidence of his friendship, I expect," Leroy said when he told the incident to Enid. "The old brick knew that I would be hard pushed to raise more."

With set faces the Rittingfords now watched Petroleum. From 195, the rock bottom price of the panic, it ascended to 280,

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Leroy's purchase price. There it remained as if anchored while Leroy lighted his pipe and sat down to wait. Then, at last, it did what Ira had predicted, rising by slow evolutions until it reached 298.

It was a solemn kind of jubilee that was held in the Rittingford house when Leroy sold out at 295. The strain had been too great, the lesson too terrible to make the evacuation of Wall Street, even with such a profit, anything but a long-looked for deliverance.

A few days later the contrition of the Rittingfords took deeper root when they received the following astonishing letter from Uncle Wilmot.

“Leroy, you young scapegrace,” it read, “I learned accidentally of your dealings with Erie Preferred. You know my views on speculation. They have not changed, nor my opinion of the lunatics who go into Wall Street and tempt Fate. At the time of the panic I suspected your embarrassment, and went to your friend Mitchell, who is a good fellow in the wrong trade. Under promise of secrecy I offered him margin in case you needed it. He would tell me little. But I

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came away poorer to the tune of six thousand dollars. I did it for the sake of the woman who spoils you and the youngsters you don't deserve.

"From your beatific expression for the last few days I judge that you have crossed the Rubicon. If this is true, you can return my loan. As for your punishment—for you can't expect to escape scot-free—it has occurred to me to prohibit the use of your nefarious winnings in the European trip you propose taking, but to compel you to draw on me for the full amount. Always & Always, Uncle Wilmot. P. S. I know of a safe investment that will net four per cent."

Leroy rubbed his thick hair.

"I did not know that coals of fire scorched so," he said. "How in the name of the saints did he hear about Erie Preferred?"

"I told him," chirped the youngest morning-glory, as if she had conferred a life-long favor.

"You—when?" Enid asked, drying her eyes.

"The day you brought him up to play with our steam cars. We told him that it was Papa's wail-woad—the Ewie Pweferred."

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Leroy and Enid gazed at each other blankly.

"You wretched little Pitcher!" Enid at last exclaimed. "Mother will have to sew up your ears!"

The youngest ewe lamb here set up a mournful wail.

"Mama insulks me!" she cried. Her brother flew to console her.

"No, sister, mama does not insulks you," he comforted. "She's only impuking you."

This was too much for the elder Rittingfords' gravity and they laughed like children themselves, gathering up the dewy morning-glories in their arms.

When dry land for all was reached Leroy turned to his wife and said: "Won't you put on your pearls and that gray gown for dinner to-night? I've asked McBurney, the architect, to drop in to talk over country house plans?"

CUPID AT FORTY¹

“**A**T last! It begins to look more like a Christmas tree and less like a cemetery evergreen!” Miss Winslow exclaimed, stepping back in artist fashion to survey her work, and feeling her æsthetic nature sensuously soothed by the sight of green-fringed, tinsel-laden branches against the rich crimson of the library walls. “I was born with an eye for backgrounds.” She took up a fat, wax Cupid, silver winged, and equipped with quiver and darts, and looked at him speculatively before soaring up the step ladder to place him at the apex of the tree.

“Have you shafts that will pierce the world-worn heart of forty?” she inquired, whimsically. “And would you have loved Psyche had she ceased to be perennially young? Old age! Ugh!” She shivered daintily.

Miss Winslow was a middle-aged belle. She was forty, and carried her years with an engaging lightness which was the marvel of

¹Prize story. Civitis Club Contest. Published in Munsey's Magazine.

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her set; she was rich, consequently popular to the point of envy; charming, and therefore possessed a few friends who loved her for herself. Yet on Christmas Eve, when all the world was sung by echoing bells into temporary tranquillity, Miss Winslow's heart was not at peace.

“Holidays are horrible resurrections to people who live alone,” she murmured. “Resurrections of heart-wringing sorrows and ghosts of the past. I am glad that I insisted upon having the tree here, spinster though I am. Ten nieces and nephews, with their respective guardians, will make the rafters ring. And Leicester in the role of family friend will relieve the Christmas dinner from the narrowness of a strictly family affair. I trust that my spirits will have regained their usual mercurial ascendancy. They are much below freezing point now.”

Miss Winslow's unrest was indefinite and therefore intangible. Only a discontent which assumes a specific form may be coped with.

Mary Winslow's life had been too active to permit of self-analysis; so she did not

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probe her mood, nor realize that pain sprang in her heart, as it must in the heart of every true woman, from the void which legions of friends only make more vacant, but which may be filled to overflowing by the magical presence of one.

She had steadfastly refused all invitations to domicile with her married brothers. "It would be very nice," she would admit, "and the children would be brought up much better. Old maids are born disciplinarians. They never are overindulgent, like grandparents. Grandparents should be seen and not heard. But, you see, I enjoy too much being perfectly free."

To appreciate liberty one must have known slavery. Miss Winslow's early life had been spent in a bondage which, though loving, had nevertheless held her enchain'd. The unconsciously selfish exactings of an invalid mother had sentenced her to the shadows of a sick-room and to an atmosphere heavy with drugs. When emancipation at last came, it was like breathing the pure sunshine for the first time. She took deep, invigorating drafts of the life of the world, enjoying her *début* doubly because it

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had come nearly a decade late. And the world enjoyed her as much as she enjoyed the world. It was so accustomed to prematurely blasé types, what wonder it welcomed gladly one who was maturely young? The years might record her as a woman past the thirties. Spirit stamped her as a girl with a new-found capacity for life.

When the soufflé menu of society ceased to satisfy her, she traveled, and beheld enthusiastically civilizations older than her own. The sight taught her to view life in its proper proportions, and to realize the microscopic part in the plan of the grand whole which her own smart set enacted.

She found pleasure in collecting curios, tapestries, and pictures. Upon her return, unrest still remaining importunate, she secured occupation and a kind of satisfaction in a diversion welcomed by people whose incomes increase in a ratio beyond their ability to disburse them. She built a magnificent home. Only those who know the delights and vexations of this form of diversion realize its absorption. Miss Winslow had her own ideas. So, likewise, had her architects. Her home must be characteristic, stamped,

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like her crested stationery, with the insignia of her personality. There was to be no such hideous deformity in it, for instance, she insisted, as a chandelier. The red library was lighted with swinging antique brass lanterns, hung in each corner, and glowing softly with the pressing of a single switch. Other rooms had side lights or curious lamps, one of them said to have belonged to a vestal virgin. The andirons in her hall were adorned with winged golden dragons—oarlocks nefariously bribed from a Venetian gondolier. Norway contributed a beautiful dark bear-skin, which was not treated to the ignominy of being trampled under foot, but was stuffed and permitted to stand erect, a savage guardian of the entrance hall. Each room represented a different period, accurate in detail, only to be secured after long historical research. French and Italian palaces had been explored and treasures purchased, not for their intrinsic value, but for the part they had played in the comedy or tragedy of the world.

Leicester had been a great help to her in building her home. Leicester was her brother's intimate friend, and an architect of

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established fame. He enjoyed drawing her out, "to steal her ideas," he said, appreciating the rareness of her ingenuity and taste.

The friendship she enjoyed with Leicester was uncommon and a source of mutual satisfaction. Miss Winslow's experience of men was large and not wholly to their advantage. It was the inevitable penalty a woman with a fortune paid. She described Leicester as an unusual man who was "never in nor out of the way," and who had no nonsense about him. This last was intelligible to her intimates. It meant that Leicester had never made love to her. His good humor was unfailing; his optimism of the brightest hue. This last was not because he did not see the world's shadows, but, rather, because he possessed that larger vision which sees also the world's sunshine, and which obstinately refused to live anywhere but in it. He elevated the ideal above the real in thought, and tried to maintain the relationship in fact. When success came he bore it without undue elation, just as he had previously borne failure without undue despair. He was beloved by the few whom his discriminating taste would admit to the valued privilege of intimacy,

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and respected by all who would have liked to claim that distinction.

Miss Winslow's labors were interrupted by a ring at the door bell and an inquiring voice in the hall. Soon after, without presenting credentials, Leicester appeared on the threshold of the library. At a glance one felt that this scrupulously groomed man was unknown to marital responsibilities. The unlined, fresh-looking face bore the imprint of the irresponsible bachelor and club man. And if his eyes sometimes suggested that life had not yet granted that which was most subtle, most satisfying, most craved, the philosopher's smile on the lips indicated the manner in which the knowledge had been borne.

“Do you come in the role of Santa Claus?” Miss Winslow asked, glancing at the presents for the children which Leicester and her servant were bringing in, and falling into the usual banter with which she and Leicester were wont to play. “And did you dust the chimney on the way down?”

“No, the modern Santa Claus comes in a horseless carriage with rubber tires,” he replied, carrying with one arm the Empire

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State Express and placing it beneath the tree.

"That explains the change in Christmas. I knew that it was not what it used to be."

"No, it's much better," he asserted.

"I tell you we have overdone it," she reiterated. "What is Christmas now in reality?"

"A time when the person who cannot extract some fun out of it would better examine his mental machinery," he said, taking off his gloves.

Miss Winslow scorned the rebuke.

"It is a time," she replied, answering her own question, "which we forestall by working so hard that we are fit subjects for the rest cure when it gets here. It is merry in anticipation and melancholy in fact."

"O, of course, when you remember every one who has ever bowed to you, and all the inmates of the old ladies' homes besides."

"It is a time," she continued, "when you receive a lot of things that you don't want, and give away everything that you do."

"I'd better take my gift home, then," he said, stooping and picking up a square package. "It's only a first edition of Shelley which —"

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“Which you happen very much to want?” she laughingly finished. It was her turn to score.

“Don’t ask me to take off my coat. I couldn’t think of it,” he said, divesting himself of the garment.

“I’m in a most unaccountable mood,” she protested. “You’ll regret it if you stay.”

“A few more regrets won’t matter,” he said, leisurely seating himself. “Besides, you’re only a sweet bell out of tune.”

She shook her head sadly at him. “No, it won’t do, Arthur. I’m not in a mood to be sugared.”

“What is it all about?” he asked, picking up a fierce-looking dagger which had fallen to the humble estate of cutting magazines.

“I’m struggling under the startlingly new discovery that the moon is not made of green cheese, and”—plaintively—“you know I’m one of the few women who like my *fromage* green. Things are not what they seem.”

“O, yes, they are. Your mood has gotten into your optics and tinged the lenses with blue.”

“I feel as if ‘life would be quite endurable if it were not for its pleasures,’ ” she contin-

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ued. "Golf is an elusive phantom; cotillions a torture; while as for people—" she hesitated.

"Go on," he said, encouragingly. "Don't mind me."

"People are masqueraders, one and all. The good are wicked saints, and the bad are righteous sinners."

"I'll have to think before I decide in which class I'd rather be found. Go on," he said; "I know there is more."

"I'm lonely," she replied, obediently.

"That's nothing. I've been living that down for years."

"This barn of a house oppresses me."

"I warned you against making it perfection," said Leicester, unsympathetically.

"I have succeeded in building an establishment. I have discovered that what I want is a home."

Leicester's lips emitted a low sound which might have been an exclamatory whistle.

"Is it really as bad as that?" he inquired. "I am afraid she is taking life seriously. Making epigrams is a sure sign."

"No, 'Laugh and grow thin' has been my motto. I've made a study of it."

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“So have I—with different results. What is the secret of your success?” he interrogated.

“O, it’s not a secret; like everything else nowadays, it’s only a state of mind.”

“Which implies that mine is suffering from fatty degeneration?” he inquired.

“You will suffer from something worse if you remain. I am really unmistakably savage. Besides, I must finish the tree.”

“By all means. But don’t send me away. It is such an incomparable pleasure to see some one else work. Besides, do you know that I have a peculiar, psychical, Madame Blavatsky sort of feeling that if I went I should be doing irremediable injury to us both? In short, I refuse to go. So you don’t feel that four walls in the fashionably crowded part of the city constitute a home?”

“They are so much expensive paint and brick,” she replied.

“You can say,” he said:

“Homeless near a thousand homes I stood,
And near a thousand tables pined and wanted
food.”

“Why will you persist in understanding one’s mood?” Miss Winslow asked, griev-

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ously. "You deprive one of the sweet misery of explaining. I feel as if this house were a museum. Everything has such an unused, creepy look. I have found that a home does not consist in having Colonial and Empire rooms, nor even in antiques like these"—she waved her hands at the old mahogany of fashionably modern outline which adorned the library. "Home lies in the spirit infused into it; and one woman's spirit"—pathetically—"will not cover a house of this size. There is one thing which I am seriously thinking of doing. I think I shall adopt an orphan child."

"An orphan asylum would fill it better," he commented.

Miss Winslow went over to the table and lifted the Cupid.

"Since you prefer me in a bad mood to any one else in a holiday one, I must continue my work."

"What are you going to do with that dangerous boy?" Leicester asked, looking at the pink-faced cherub as she dangled him from a string held between finger and thumb.

"I am now about to hang Cupid," she said, solemnly.

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“How delightful! I have always wanted to be present at an execution. Besides, it’s a fate I’ve often thought he deserved.”

“You must have suffered a good deal at his hands,” she said, looking sideways at him between half-closed lashes. “That reminds me—I heard some one at the Hoyts’ dance last night call you an ‘artistic flirt.’ ”

“And what, may I ask, is a flirt, artistic or otherwise?” Leicester inquired, with sparkling eyes.

Miss Winslow thought for a moment.

“A flirt,” she replied, “is a man with a small capacity for loving every woman, and a large incapacity for loving one.”

The laughter died from Leicester’s eyes.

“Do you believe that is true of me?” he asked, lightly. Miss Winslow did not reply.

“Do you really believe that of me?” he asked, more seriously.

Miss Winslow moved uneasily. There was something in Leicester’s tone which she could not meet with the usual banter.

“Look at me, Mary,” he said, peremptorily. “You can study the pattern of your rugs any time.”

Miss Winslow shot a swift glance at him,

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then lowered her lids again. Leicester rose and came toward her.

“You have very pretty eyelashes. I have always admired them,” he said, standing directly in front of her. “But I want you to look at me and tell me if you honestly believe I have a large incapacity for loving one woman?”

Something new in his voice, something subtle and almost painful in the atmosphere, played havoc with Miss Winslow’s usually well-adjusted mental processes. She felt silenced, paralyzed, almost afraid. When the silence became intolerable, being a woman of the world, she treated the occasion with the world’s greatest emotional safeguard: she took refuge in a laugh.

“I impeach your power to catechize me,” she said. “Here, take your arch enemy, Cupid, and be revenged by hanging him high.”

He took the wax figure from her and stood as if in debate. Then he turned toward the tree and addressed the figure in his hand. “Cupid,” he said, “I hang you with many apologies. I confess to a fondness for you not shared by the lady of this manor. I shall sus-

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pend you high where you can keep a watchful eye upon her. Who knows—" he broke off and ascended the steps. The universal god revolved slowly in mid air in his new home on the tree, then settled into permanence of direction.

"See, Mary," Leicester cried, looking over his shoulder, "he is pointing his arrow at you. Have a care—" As he said it, his foot, which was reaching backward for a lower step, miscalculated, and with a crash he fell heavily to the floor.

"Well, of all awkward brutes!" he exclaimed, regaining a sitting position where he remained with one foot under him. "The trick elephant in the circus could have done better."

Miss Winslow's first inclination was to laugh. When Leicester attempted to rise, however, and unconsciously emitted a groan, she flew at once to his side. "Is it your foot? You've twisted and perhaps sprained it! O, if you had only gone before!"

"Don't, Mary; don't hit a man when he's down. You may think the fall was retribution, but I attribute it to another cause." He gave a glance at the Cupid. "That little ras-

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cal, I believe, knocked me down!" He closed his eyes with pain. Miss Winslow's talent for emergencies came to the front. She summoned her man to help lift Leicester to the couch, and then flew to the telephone and called a doctor.

Her own physician responded. After the usual pullings, pinchings, and pressings, he cheerfully pronounced the wrench a very bad sprain.

"It will be a matter of weeks, though hardly, I hope, of months," he said, amiably. "You'd better have yourself moved where you can be made comfortable and be supplied with diverting companionship. These affairs are tedious at the best." He offered his further services, which Miss Winslow, catching a telegraphic message from Leicester's eyes, declined, saying that her man could do everything necessary. In a few moments she was alone with her guest, who sat helpless as a child with bandaged foot elevated upon a taboret in front of him.

"Well?" Miss Winslow said, in some embarrassment. "Why did you not allow the doctor to accompany you home? Do you prefer the distraction of William's accent?"

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Leicester contemplated his wounded foot. "Mary," he said, "do you realize that we are facing a state of things?"

"I realize that *you* are."

"Well, be unselfish and imagine that you are too. Do you think that a bachelor's apartment house, without a woman in sight, ideally fills the doctor's prescription?"

"Of course I don't. It is most unfortunate. O, if your married sister did not live one hundred miles away!"

"Yes, or if I could be expressed to her."

"You can have a nurse!" she suggested. "But you will have to eat and sleep and wink on schedule. And you hate doing things by rule."

"Yes, and if she were not pretty she would make one feel worse. And if she were—"

"You'd fall in love with her."

"Not at all. But there's no telling what would happen to *her*. No, a woman nurse I feel is an anomaly."

"Then, why not have a man?"

"A man is a monstrosity. I should be at liberty to throw boots and vigorous invectives at him. But I am afraid I would be unfit for society at the end of the term. No, Mary, I

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see but one loophole. Fate has erected a signpost with a straight, clear path for you and me."

"For me?" she echoed, feebly.

"Yes, I have a proposition to make, a most logical solution. You wish to adopt some one; I am in need of a home. Do you not see that Providence has left a charge, not on your door step, but on your step ladder, as it were?"

"No, I don't," she gasped.

"This foundling," he continued, "has every requirement which your orphan child could not possess. You must have some one who understands your every peccadillo; who will not laugh when you sigh, or weep when you are merry; who will not monopolize your favorite chair, be bored with *Omar Khayyám* or sleep through the opera. Mary, we are all only children of a larger growth. Listen to fate, and save me from the doom of solitary confinement by adopting—*me!*"

"Did you sprain your brain as well as your ankle?" Miss Winslow inquired.

"No, my senses are intact."

"But you don't mean—you didn't intend"—she faltered.

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“I certainly did. You always had unusual perspicacity. You may catalogue me as—No. 25, is it? I have had the honor to make you what the lady novelist terms an ‘honorable proposal of marriage.’”

Miss Winslow fell back in her chair.

“What more rational solution of a difficult problem?” he continued. “You are lonely and wish to adopt some one. I am sentenced to bachelor banishment for months. You wouldn’t like to think of me fuming and fretting existence away, would you, when you might have prevented it?”

Miss Winslow leaned forward in her chair and quietly scanned his face.

Then the blood flamed over her own, tipping even her close set ears with crimson.

“Yes, he really means it,” she said, musingly, and with reluctance. “He has asked me to marry him, for convenience’ sake, and he does not realize how he has humiliated me. Yet that could be borne; but to be disappointed in him! One can never get used to that! And I thought he understood me!” Then at a low exclamation from Leicester, “O, I give you credit for not intending to pain me. The awful part is not to know that

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you have. Do you realize what you have said? I have heard of men who married to obtain a housekeeper. It is a novelty to meet one who wishes a trained nurse."

Leicester's face flushed deeply. He opened his mouth to refute the injustice, but she would not let him begin.

"No, don't speak," she said. "I am choking with the words I want to say." She met his gaze now with eyes from which vehement indignation flashed, and he sank back among the pillows of the couch.

"How dared you?" she inquired, with low, forcefully distinct enunciation. "How dared you to speak to me of marriage and never speak of love? Do you think forty outgrows it?" She covered her hot cheeks with her hands. "Let me say one thing more," as again he attempted to check her; "of course we can't be friends after to-night. The *bon camaraderie* of our relationship is over. You have forever spoiled it. Your going will make a void in my life. I don't think I ever knew until to-night how large a place you filled." Her voice gave a little break which she quickly controlled. "You satisfied me because I thought that you understood me.

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But the one vital thing you did not understand. Let me tell you now that you may know why I am so stung. I, Mary Winslow, spinster, with face turned toward the setting sun, demand of the man who would win me absorbing, all-compelling love. I am not a woman to bestow myself. I must be won, and it cannot be done with a jest."

Leicester's face had grown white as he listened. Sometimes he closed his eyes as if trying to shut out sound. Sometimes the hands on his knees moved a little. When he spoke his voice was entirely without the intensity of tone she had used. It was the conversational voice of a stunned man finding refuge in conventional phrase; the ever-blessed law of habit which prevents human tension from being stretched too far.

"I can't tell you how I regret having pained you," he finally said. "It was the last thing I intended to do; and I am sorry not to have done well what I should like to have done the best of all. Yet," with a touch of whimsicality, "I don't know that it is surprising. One can hardly expect a stage proposal from a man who has never made one before."

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Her eyes were fastened upon the tree. Her attitude indicated a polite but weary judge who was tolerantly waiting to hear what the defense might say.

"If I had not felt so deeply, I could have been more eloquent," he continued. "We have played with words so long it was hard to be serious, even when I most wished. I must have taken it for granted that you knew that I loved you. Women are either amazingly astute or incredibly blind in such matters. Why did you suppose I had haunted your hearth for nearly ten years? I think it began then, when your mother was taken away."

He spoke simply, as if relating a narrative long familiar, and one that should not surprise his listener.

"You will wonder why I never told you. It was because you came into your heritage late. I would not try to take it from you. You found your girlhood years later than most women. While your mother lived her health held you in a bondage of love. When you entered the gay world it was a fairyland to you. Like a girl you enjoyed each moment. I would not rob you of one. I fol-

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lowed your enthusiasms, your disappointments, your triumphs, waiting until pleasure should pall. I wished you to find for yourself that the pretty bubbles you chased turned to air when you grasped them. When I came to-night I knew immediately that the mood I had longed for had come. You were heartsick and filled with satiety. The apples of Sodom were bitter in your mouth. I was so happy I could have shouted. For, Mary"—he leaned forward and spoke rapidly—"it was love your soul was crying for; love, the deepest need of human life. And what your heart was vaguely demanding, mine had long been throbbing to give. Do you know to what heights of folly I have been led by this masterful passion? Do you know that I go blocks out of my way at night to pass your window? Do you know that I visit barbaric receptions for a glimpse of your face? Can you realize the pangs of jealousy I suffer when I find you monopolized by some young cub whom in fancy I cuff and throw out at the door?" His eyes rested on her and held her with relentless power. "Think of the men who have

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loved you. Did you fancy I did not know when you turned them away? Love is keen. Mary, you do care, or you would not have been so stung by my cursed flippancy to-night. Don't try to answer me now. I will go home, and in spite of solitude my Christmas will be the happiest I have ever known. Think of what I have said, and remember—your happiness and mine are at stake. O, Mary, gift of God to me, prayer and creed of my life, give me the right before the world to worship— Mary—Mary—sweetheart, don't cry."

Reaction from her indignation had left Miss Winslow quiescent. When Leicester spoke, incredulity and then amazement swept over her, followed by a peace which was subtle, restful, new. When his words came faster and faster, she felt herself swept along on their current and questioned not whither she was being borne. After years of enforced repression it was blissful to let herself go. That Christmas eve her beautiful home, her material possessions, had seemed but a background which intensified the poverty of her heart. She had unconsciously longed for those imperishable riches which

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now were laid at her feet. And deeper than the knowledge of what she would receive was the certainty of what she knew she could give. When Leicester's voice broke with its new tenderness, her overtaxed nerves gave way and she sobbed like a child. The sight restored him to the safe path of the commonplace, and his next words were in the usual bantering tone.

“Well, of all things, that is the unkindest, to cry where I cannot reach you! Is that handkerchief a flag of truce?”

But he could not win her to smiles. Sob after sob filled the room; the pitiful, long-drawn sobs of childhood, or of womanhood that retains the sensitive heart of the child.

“If you do not wish to break my heart, Mary, you will stop hurting me and come here at once. The doctor's infliction was nothing to this. Mary, I command you to come here.” Then, as she did not heed him, he said in a voice in which each word was a caress: “Mary, I have waited years patiently for you. See—I will not look. Will you not come to me in my distress?” And obediently, with face still covered, like a little child she came.

A WINGLESS VICTORY

THE STORY OF THE VENUS OF MILO

EVERY man, asserted the sage of Concord, is on this sphere for a distinct purpose. Ludington was thirty years old when he discovered his mission—no less consequential a one than to find and restore the arms of the most beautiful woman in the world, the Venus of Milo.

Ludington was a good man by the grace of God and an artist by his own hard efforts. If the process had been reversed, he might have been better known. He also lacked the spur of poverty to quicken his art. His attic was a modern apartment house; the selling of a picture contributed a curio to his collection, not a dinner to his hungry vitals. He was quite rebellious at Fate for having lavishly provided him with three meals a day. But he was glad of his income when he found his mission, for it enabled him to command the opportunities for success.

He began to study assiduously the history

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of this ancient marvel. He filled his rooms with drawings and casts of the armless goddess, and also with the countless restorations. All the latter seemed to him totally inadequate. The finding of the statue was comparatively recent. The more Ludington studied, the stronger the conviction gripped him that the original arms were still in existence. Where were they? What was their position consistent with the high simplicity of the figure's early Greek outlines? These questions began to torture him. He longed for no earthly arms as he longed for the Parian marble members of this universal feminine ideal. In short, Ludington had fallen in love with an idea, a more comfortable state, it might be argued, than to be in love with a reality, for it left him his undivided freedom and revenue.

When an idea is strong enough to take complete possession of a man it ferments until it moves him to action. Ludington's idea soon wafted him across the ocean, a modern Sir Galahad, his quest a noble one, his motive unselfish, for he was willing to give all that he possessed toward its realization. If he succeeded, it followed that the

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world of art would revere him. But more than this, the people—for Ludington was something of a sociologist—the great, struggling masses worshiping the principle of beauty, they knew not why, would be the largest beneficiaries. For was not this statue the people's Venus? To the people then he would restore her, in all the majesty of her creator's conception. So he turned his face toward southern Europe, her birthplace and her former home.

Filled with the enthusiasm of a high purpose, he entered the gateway of the Mediterranean; sailed past the iron-eyed British fortress; turned from the beckoning Riviera and skirted Algiers, Tunis, and Malta; passed alluring Greece, with her wonderfully indented coast line and more wonderful halo of past glory; plowing through the blue beneath, drinking in the blue overhead, straight on to his Mecca. This was the ancient, volcanic island of Melos, the apple island, crowned by St. Elias, and carpeted by vineyards, where his marble divinity had been unearthed.

His luggage safely stored at the inn in the small town of Melos, he set out to find the

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descendants of the peasant who had discovered the Venus.

He was rewarded by finding his grandson, an educated vinegrower of large interests, who at once courteously proceeded with him toward the spot where the art treasures had been concealed.

“It was in 1820,” said the man in French, as they crossed the fertile fields and stood over a small rectangular excavation, “that my grandfather was working on this spot trying to uproot a pistachio tree. To his surprise, the stones and sand fell away, revealing a cavern. My grandfather took one look and ran terrified to M. Brest, the French consul, telling him that he had unearthed a cave filled with ghosts. Upon investigation, a crypt was found filled with statues. In the center, about at that spot,” throwing a stone into the cavern, “stood the Venus on a plain, square base about thirty-one inches high. The Hermes, now in the Louvre, flanked her sides.”

Ludington glowed with suppressed interest. “Was your grandfather explicit as to the finding of the arms?” he asked.

“Yes, they were lying at the statue’s feet.

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M. Brest and my grandfather adjusted them to the Venus and they fitted exactly."

"And their position?" Ludington asked, leaning eagerly forward, digging his cane into the yellow soil.

"The left hand held the famous apple of discord. The right clasped the drapery about the waist."

Ludington relapsed, grievously disappointed. The position was one of the restorations that his artistic instinct had instantly and strenuously rejected.

"You must pardon me," he said, dejectedly, "but I can't reconcile the statue's impersonal, lofty expression with one of triumphant vanity. It seems to me that the sum total of all knowledge shines from her features. They mirror poignant melancholy and supreme regret—the conclusion of human experience." He looked toward the horizon and went on, half to himself: "Human life carries the same heart through all ages. Of all emotions suffering is the most widely comprehended and is the strongest of magnets. This woman's chiseled message is conscious knowledge of universal sin and suffering mingled with universal pity. That is

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why she is the people's Venus—it is by virtue of her powerful, sympathetic look."

Ludington was aroused from his soliloquy by a slight forced cough. Looking up, he saw that his words had been overhead by a pale, slender man who was regarding him with piercing eyes from the other side of the excavation. Their effect on Ludington was startling. He was not a conscious follower of the psychic. But he felt at that moment peculiarly aware of being the receiver of a message conveyed by some wave current from the stranger to himself. "Trust me; I can help you," the message ran. "We shall meet again." In a second the man was gone. Yet when he left, Ludington's nerves vibrated as if with an electric shock.

"Who is that man?" he managed to ask of his companion.

"I have never seen him before. Probably some antiquarian or archæologist," was the reply.

Ludington shook himself free from the unusual sensation and continued his investigations.

"What was done with the excavations?" he inquired.

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“The fragments found in this crypt—arms, legs, and heads—filled seventeen boxes. These were shipped at once by a French man-of-war on its way to Toulon. But a receipt of their arrival was never received. The immense value of the statues was not realized and the attempt to trace them was lukewarm. The French and the Turks are supposed to have had a struggle over the possession of the Venus and the arms were lost, either left in the hold of a Turkish ship, or perhaps thrown overboard into the sea.”

From the crest of the hill Ludington looked out over the sapphire waters. Perhaps even now the lost treasures were lying imbedded in the bay. His heart beat violently as he turned to go.

“If monsieur is to write about the finding of the statue,” the man said, accompanying him, “will monsieur kindly correct the report that my grandfather received five hundred piastres for his discovery? He neither expected nor received reward.”

Ludington walked briskly back to the inn. His mind was revolving a wild proposition, no less a one than dredging the bay. The operation would absorb months and his lim-

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ited fortune. But he believed with all his heart that the relics he sought lay at the bottom of the sea.

Almost simultaneously with his arrival at the inn a caller was announced. Ludington felt no surprise. He divined at once that his singular friend of the morning had followed him, and with difficulty restrained an inclination to greet him with open arms.

A closer view of the stranger revealed a man whose physical life had not kept pace with his mental development. His delicate frame was crowned with the brow of a scholar and the eyes of a dreamer, while his manners indicated a world-wide culture.

“My name is Von Bulow,” he said, in academic English with a strong German accent. “You will pardon my intrusion, I know, when I offer as defense a wish to confer with you upon the fascinating matter which is claiming your attention.”

Ludington bowed in silence. He had learned the wisdom of letting the other man indulge in speech. The newcomer accepted the offer of an Invincible, then said with unexpected directness, “I can tell you where to find the Venus of Milo’s arms.”

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Ludington started. His companion's dignified bearing carried the stamp of verity, but Ludington possessed all of his astute race's dread of being duped. He therefore determined to hold his enthusiasm well curbed until he had heard his visitor's story.

"I am an artist, as I assume you to be." Ludington again bowed, once more feeling the strange suggestion of the early morning that his mind, through some thought alchemy, was clearly revealed to this man. "For years I have saturated myself with data concerning the Venus of Milo. Permit me to say that the authoritative facts of her history are meager, and from these few, even, the unprejudiced student must depart. He must be broad enough to approach this subject untrammeled by the tyranny of past thinking." Ludington's earnest eyes offered silent acquiescence that he belonged to that type. "As you doubtless know, Mr. Brest was over seventy years old before he met his first reporter, M. Doussault, forty years after the finding of the goddess. We should therefore expect discrepancies in this old gentleman's statement. In fact, we may dismiss it as worthless. The restorations,

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especially Tarral's, are an affront to æsthetic taste." Ludington recalled having used this very term regarding them. "Tomes have been written by Von Ravensburg, Overbeck, Muller, Jahn, Welcker and others, piling up eruditions and archæological research to no purpose. I saw that my investigations must follow widely divergent lines and was rewarded with—*complete success.*"

He spoke with authority. Ludington's cigar went out, but he did not notice it.

"When a circumstantial statement is generally accepted, it is a good time to begin to doubt it," Herr Von Bulow went on. "I began by asking myself, Why assume this statue to be a Venus? I compared her with other celebrated Venuses—that of Medici, of the Capitol, the Hermitage, of Cnidus, and the Venus of Capua—and found her of an entirely different order. She had none of the shallow self-consciousness of these merely beautiful women." Again Ludington perceived the exact correspondence between his visitor's line of reasoning and his own. "Why not a Madonna as well as a Venus? There is very good evidence that the early Christians supplied her with arms and a

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wooden infant to meet the requirements of a new faith. But the statue found in Milo is not a Madonna, is not a Venus. She is—but I must not anticipate my story.

“I searched the records of this island. There is no trace of an ancient temple or theater where a statue of Venus’s worth might reasonably be located—for it is certain that the early Greeks appreciated her value. I could draw but one conclusion: the statue had been sent from Athens to Melos for concealment in time of great danger. I must, therefore, follow the trail back to Athens and wrest the secret from the wrecks of her past glory.

“I went at once to the Acropolis and began my search among its ruins. You remember the beautiful little Ionic temple projecting beyond the Propylæa? The temple of Nike Apteros, or Wingless Victory? Civilization has another debt to settle with the Turks for the mutilation of this lovely monument. I examined the balustrade of Victories surrounding it. Then I made a startling discovery: *an unmistakable resemblance existed between these figures and the Venus of Milo!*” He drew a number of cuts from his

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pockets. Ludington leaned forward in deepest interest. "Observe the similarity, especially in this the most famous of the reliefs, 'The Victory unloosing her sandal.' Is not the resemblance in the drapery striking? Note the same long, pure lines, the same simplicity of conception and composition. These Victories you see all have wings. But it was known that a *wingless Victory* had occupied the central position in the temple. Tradition asserts that Athenians made her without wings that she might never leave Athens. But when Pausanias visited Athens the statue *was gone*. What had become of her? Do you follow me?"

"Certainly—she had been buried in Melos."

"Exactly," Von Bulow returned, his wonderful eyes sparkling. "The investigations were now reduced to the question of her original position and the resting place of her arms. I refused to believe them destroyed and began my difficult search.

"One of my maxims has been, Always expect to accomplish the impossible. It is the expected that happens. The evidence all pointed to one place for the missing mem-

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bers. In the face of scoffing and jeering, I attempted the impossible—I dredged the harbor." Ludington smiled warmly at the continued parallel line of his own intentions. "For the most part my object was a secret one, the majority believing that by some new process I was seeking pearls. At the end of two years I was rewarded by finding—*both of my Victory's arms*.

"Why have not these arms been accepted?" Ludington asked, guardedly.

"They will be accepted in time when offered by the advocate whom I shall select." Ludington's pulse bounded. He saw his mission taking concrete form. "You are young, Mr. Ludington. But you are thoughtful, and must have learned that the man who comes to uproot preconceived theories is never welcome. We are creatures of habit, and dread upheaval even in our ideals. The world prefers its favorite Venus to be a Venus and not a Victory, just as you English-speaking races will accept your Shakespeare at the hands of no one but the alleged Bard of Avon. The iconoclast must be willing to be stoned, though his memory may be revered."

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“But the arms—how do you know that they are the original arms?” Ludington asked, his whole interest concentrating on them.

“Because I have tried them on the original statue of the Louvre. I obtained a reluctant permission from the committee on control for the trial. They compelled me to make the test at midnight, when the Louvre was empty. The arms were adjusted. They not only fitted, but corresponded. For one brief moment I stood in front of this *chef d’oeuvre* of art and saw it as a harmonious whole. It was like the transfiguration of a new birth. That moment will always remain the supreme one of my life.”

“And the authorities?” Ludington asked. Von Bulow’s eyes flashed. His bearing changed from well-contained self-mastery to unbridled anger.

“Rejected it!” he exclaimed. “Rejected it like the stubborn, pig-headed Frenchmen that they are. What could one expect of a nation that had restored the statue at the wrong equilibrium? One of the blessings of the French Commune was that through its medium the Venus was properly replaced.

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She had been concealed in a cellar for safety, in her two original parts. But before the Commune, wooden wedges had been inserted in the rear in this dividing line, throwing her forward at a tipsy angle, completely upsetting her center of gravity! Why is it that music and art committees seem to be selected for their hide-bound ignorance of the subject? But this committee will soon change its decision! I have a plan, feasible, certain of success, when put into action by the right intelligence. It is to approach first—" he stopped and put his hand to his head. The blue lines around his eyes had grown deeper. "I have been told to avoid excitement," he murmured. "But I cannot speak calmly on this subject."

"Never mind the rejection," Ludington said, soothingly. He was on fire now with interest. "Tell me—where are the arms?"

"In a subterranean hold in my fortress, guarded by night and day. They have been waiting for the man whom I should find worthy of them. I have had a long, weary search." Then he gazed with unmistakable intent straight into Ludington's eyes. "For some time I have believed that America—

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that thinking young Hercules among nations —would produce my apostle. This morning, when Fate led me to the excavation and I heard your words; when I saw that you had grasped the fact that this statue was intended to appeal to the mind rather than to the eye, I seemed to hear a voice say 'Behold the man!'"

Ludington's cheeks flushed, his breath quickened.

"In all earnestness I ask you, Mr. Ludington, will you put yourself unreservedly into my hands and accept this sacred charge?"

Ludington walked to the window and looked out. He could not trust himself to speak. When he returned he put out his hand to his guest and said: "I feel altogether unworthy of the honor you have offered me, Herr Von Bulow, but I solemnly accept the charge."

A look of great relief passed over Von Bulow's shriveled features.

"We will start to-morrow, then, by the morning boat." He arose to go.

"To-morrow?" said Ludington, eager to begin his work. "Why not to-day?"

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Von Bulow smiled. "Very well; we will leave this evening instead."

Left alone, Ludington paced the floor. He was filled with the wonder of a holy joy at his selection, intoxicated with the almost certain success that he was convinced now would crown his mission, and exhilarated by the enormity and far-reaching effect it would have on the world. When his guide returned he had long been ready.

"We have plenty of time; the boat is late," Von Bulow said.

Ludington placed a chair for his guest and was shocked at the change in his appearance. The excitement of the morning had told upon him, and he had grown perceptibly weaker.

"May I ask one question?" Ludington inquired. "Forgive my curiosity, but I am consumed to know—what is the position of the arms?"

Von Bulow smiled.

"You have shown unusual restraint not to have asked the question before," he replied. "I had thought that the Wingless Victory doubtless held a shield; not the supposed one of Mars, but one on which she was inscribing

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the names of the Attic heroes. An objection to this theory was that she appeared to be looking at a point far away from her writing. But might she not have been gazing toward Marathon, in which direction the temple opened? Or again, may she not have been bestowing wreaths? I was wrong in both theories. The so-called Venus of Milo, *the real Wingless Victory*, did not hold a shield, was not bestowing laurels. She was—"Ludington drew his breath. His companion's words came with difficulty. Suddenly they ceased and a deep, gurgling sound welled up in him culminating in a peculiar shriek. Then his slender frame stiffened and he relapsed into unconsciousness with his secret on his lips.

Ludington started for assistance, his disappointment overridden by his desire to help his new friend, and met three men coming toward his door.

"Beg pardon," said the first, "but is his Highness Prince Karl Ludwig within your room?"

"No, but you can help me with a very sick man if you will come with me for a moment," Ludington replied.

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The men followed him into the room.

“It’s he,” said the first newcomer. “Poor gentleman. It’s the first one he’s had in four months.” He put a handkerchief over the suffering man’s features. “Carry him to his suite, where Dr. Muller awaits him,” he commanded. “Carefully now.” Tenderly the men lifted their burden and disappeared.

“That is not Prince Karl Ludwig, of the mad House of Bavaria?” Ludington gasped.

“The same, and one of the most scholarly gentlemen in the empire.”

“But is he—mad?”

“Only on one subject—the Venus of Milo’s arms.”

Ludington sank into a chair.

“He escaped from us and came for the first time to this island, where we tracked him,” the prince’s secretary continued. “Do not be disheartened by this discovery. Prince Karl has been given credence by the best artists in Europe. His story is so ingenious, his own belief in it so convincing, that the worst skeptics have been deceived. He has also studied hypnotism and makes successful use of his knowledge to win faith.

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His Wingless Victory theory was first suggested by some artist. But there isn't a word of truth in the prince's story. He no more owns those two priceless arms than Kaiser Wilhelm owns four. It is generally believed that they were long ago fed to some lime kiln on the island with bushels of other fragments—though the natives, of course, deny it—and now are serving as plaster in some wine cellar. I will bid you good-day. I must go to the prince."

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“**I**F only you had not spoken, and changed the conditions,” she said, mournfully, looking away from the piazza into the shadowy moonlight. “I had felt so happy and safe with you. I didn’t suppose that you contained the shred of a proposal.”

“But I haven’t changed the conditions,” he protested. “A white gown and the proper stage setting will make a fool of a Solon. You must blame your dressmaker and Mrs. Van Buckram’s landscape gardener. When we meet in town we’ll be the same congenial chums.”

“I’m too old to believe in such sophistry,” she said, shaking her head.

“You mean that other men have promised to be brothers to you?”

She gave a smiling assent.

“Well, at least, I never promised any other girl,” he offered.

“Not at all original,” she commented smilingly.

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“The other men lied,” he replied, catching the drift of her meaning.

Then they both laughed. They had played so seriously upon flippant subjects that they could not resist enlivening a serious matter with the casuistry of play.

“You see you have every qualification for a chum,” he continued. “You’re a feminine anomaly. You don’t make a practice of dropping things. You are not always wanting a window opened. Why, your preference in edibles, even, is like a man’s.”

“I can certainly consume overdone cheeses and underdone steaks without the aid of a nerve tonic,” she replied, laughingly.

“And you’re the only girl that I’ve ever seen who could eat oysters as fast as a man.”

“It’s an important accomplishment,” she murmured.

“Well, is it to be friends forever?” he asked, as she made a motion to go into the house.

“If only I could be sure that you agreed with me,” she said, turning to look at him. “To me, marriage is a caldron of misery. I couldn’t begin to count the married men I’ve met who are looking for sympathy.”

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“Nor I the married women who are ‘misunderstood.’ ”

“To be tied together is fatal to *bonne camaraderie*,” she said, following up her vantage. “The ideal state is a little more than friendship and a good deal less than love.”

“About seventy degrees in the temperamental thermometer,” he suggested. Whereupon she smiled, happy at being understood and flattered by that sweetest of convictions, the belief that one has won another to the personal point of view.

Then they shook hands to seal the friendly compact. And they did not see the arrow armed boy who was skulking behind the honeysuckle vines hide his face with a chubby hand which did not wholly conceal a smile.

For six months, the following winter in town, the man and woman played the dangerous game of the moth and the flame. The moth boasted that his wings were of asbestos. The flame asserted that her warmth brightened but did not consume. Both were the products of an intensely modern civilization. Individual liberty was the imperative necessity. The fact they failed to consider was that hearts were developed before heads.

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One day they received an enlightening shock. It was on the occasion of a walk in the Battery Park. A tacit understanding had led them to choose places unfrequented by their set. Talking eagerly about the artistic merits of a Sudermann drama, they approached a bench from which an old woman arose and hobbled toward them.

"Make way for the sweethearts," she mumbled toothlessly. "Take the bench, honeys, take the bench."

The flame dropped on to the bench from sheer shock. The moth hovered above her, smiling with evident enjoyment at her discomfiture.

"Do you—suppose—we look like that?" the flame gasped.

"It's better than wearing the matrimonial signet, isn't it?" he replied, dropping lazily onto the bench beside her. "How would you enjoy," he asked, in a voice, that contained not a quiver beyond friendliness, "to drop in somewhere for a conventional ceremony, and then forget that it's been performed?"

"What do you mean?" she replied, not daring to look at him.

"I mean, just for convenience sake. Of

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course, in the eyes of the world, we'd be married people. But to ourselves we should be simply legalized chums. We could run about on trips together, then—the Mediterranean, you know, and the Nile."

He was appealing to the vulnerable side of her nature. She closed her eyes to shut out the enticement of Oriental mysticism and ancient civilizations. His composure added to her perturbation.

"We couldn't do it," she cried, shrinking. "We should become talked out and indifferent and rude. The commonplaceness of it would rust our souls. When you labeled me with the possessive pronoun and introduced me as 'your wife,' I should cower like a captive."

"And if I heard you continually 'my husbanding' me, I should rush for solace to the club."

"I don't understand you," she said, turning toward him passionately. "You talk as if you did not care, and yet I feel as if you would like to make me care. But I can't! I can't! I am afraid of you. I want to be taken home and be left free!"

She thought that she wished to ring down

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the curtain upon their friendship. She represented the intrusion of the melodramatic element, when refined comedy was the role for which she had learned her cues.

The other realized the cause of her rebellion, and calling a hansom took her home. Rubber tires silenced the vehicle's rumble, and wisdom gave eloquence to the situation by repressing the man's speech. His mind, however, was not inactive, and he fervently blessed the old woman for having ruffled an exasperatingly placid pool.

A week passed before he again sought her. Then she had resumed her serio-comic part. But when he looked into her eyes, the return glance was not so uncompromisingly sisterly. And if he gazed long enough, the eyelids discreetly drooped. At this sign of awakened self-consciousness he invariably slipped his hand into the pocket of his evening coat. Something that he felt there put intrepidity into his glance and tone.

He asked her to play for him, and she began Paderewski's "Minuet."

"I found a little poem in a magazine the other day," he said, standing near the piano and looking among some papers that he had

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taken from his pocket. "It's so rhythmical that I'm going to ask a musical friend to preserve it in song."

She watched him as he hunted for the poem.

"That long envelope looks like a ticket on an ocean greyhound," she said.

"Yes," he replied meditatively—"on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse. I'm going to sail next month."

"How nice!" she exclaimed, without enthusiasm. "And how long will you be away?"

"I can't tell," he answered. "I'm going over to arrange for our exhibit at the Paris exposition. If I like the change, I may remain and represent the house."

She bowed her head over the ivory keys, playing softly as if intensely interested in each note. He leaned forward until he was very near her.

"The envelope contains two tickets," he said, persuasively. "I bought the other for a chum who I believed would not sentence me to go alone."

The piano still broke the silence, though Paderewski's masterpiece was growing fal-

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tering and faint. Presently a tear splashed its lovely strains.

He reached down and took her hands from the keyboard. "Don't you see, dear," he said, "that the difficulty lies not in the slavery of marriage, but in the selfishness of men and women?"

She released herself, rising and making an effort to regain her composure. She picked up the envelope and pretended to examine it. But a new element in her nature was stronger, and she turned toward him like Clytie to the sun. With the pain of the announcement of his departure had come the knowledge that her dependence upon him was infinite. When he took her in his arms, all the old-time obstacles seemed to fade away.

"Will you go?" at last he whispered.

"I think that I'll have to, just—to be chummy," she said, through a very damp bit of lace.

He removed the hemstitched fragment and kissed her like anything but a chum. Then he said solemnly, "Comrades to the end of the world."

Her sense of humor here reasserted itself,

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and a smile rainbowed its way over her face.

“Friendship? What a travesty!” she exclaimed. “What a failure!”

“No,” he replied, “married friendship—the matrimonial rock of ages—the Gibraltar of all time!”

WHAT DOTH IT PROFIT A MAN?

THE STORY OF A MULTIMILLIONAIRE

CONRAD KINGSLEY pushed back his chair from the breakfast table and drew his first leisurely breath in thirty-five years: at forty-five he had reached the apex of his ambition and was ready to retire from business life.

To withdraw at the summit of commercial achievement had been difficult, but he had promised himself in youth to make a fortune and retire in middle age. His intention was to enjoy life while he was still young enough to appreciate its pleasures; and when he said pleasures he did not mean frivolities. He meant culture, travel, and leisurely acquaintance with the best that past ages had bestowed.

With the companionship of a cigar and the morning paper he sat down in a sunny bay-window. He half expected to see his horses dash up to the door; to see his old self mechanically enter the carriage to be whirled to the tread-mill he had called his office, where,

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for so many years, he had daily threshed out his business career.

How young he felt with responsibility lifted, how happy at the freedom of the new years! He knew that he had been a slave. Not only his days but his evenings, closeted with a stenographer, had been given to financing. Now he issued his own emancipation proclamation and stepped forth not only a multimillionaire but the arbiter of his destiny—a free man!

The morning paper contained nothing of vital interest to him except the stock quotations. These plunged him into a reverie from which he at last awoke feeling that the time must be near noon. But when he looked at his watch he saw it was not yet ten.

He went upstairs to find his daughter and tell her that he wished to go out with her. His intention had always been to make companions of his son and daughter—when he had the time.

Elizabeth was found in her sitting room writing notes. When her father made known his wish she blushed in surprise as if the request had come from a stranger, but said that she would be very glad.

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Ten minutes later they were swinging down the avenue.

Elizabeth had promised to meet young Woodman, the artist, at the National Gallery to view some pictures by a foreign artist who Woodman thought had the divine spark. This proposition met with Mr. Kingsley's approval: as the architect of his future he felt that he could do no better than to put in the first strokes at the shrine of Art.

Every step taken in the cool morning sunshine plunged Mr. Kingsley deeper into happiness. The past well performed, the future well intentioned—what more could be desired?

When the passers-by looked at Elizabeth the financier experienced a revelation: Elizabeth was handsome, whereas he had thought her merely wholesome.

A new pride of ownership blossomed in him—she belonged to him, this athletic Juno! He stole shy, critical looks at her and wondered why she dressed so plainly. Her sables were all right—he knew because he remembered the figures of the bill.

As they entered the quiet gallery, Elizabeth, with an archness she might have be-

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stowed upon a middle-aged admirer, told her father that she was going to turn him loose; that he might browse where he would and enjoy the pictures while she and Mr. Woodman sat down and discussed them.

Mr. Kingsley accepted his dismissal, but in ten minutes returned; he had "done" the whole gallery. If Elizabeth thought to be rid of him while she indulged in a quiet flirtation, she must reckon with her father first.

He seated himself disturbingly near the young couple on the crimson-velvet divan; but they were talking earnestly and did not seem conscious that he had returned. He listened. Where was the quiet flirtation, where the personal note that in his day had been the silver cord on which all conversation between a youth and a maiden had been strung? Elizabeth and the artist were talking of the paintings, and talking in terms which Mr. Kingsley did not understand. He caught "middle-distances," "composition," "dry-points," "genre," "aerial perspective" and "monochromes." Where had Elizabeth learned this language? On those European tours taken with her mother? Mr. Kingsley had been too busy to go.

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He leaned forward and searched the pictures hung opposite him. Why could he not see those qualities that Elizabeth and this stripling saw? He heard them mention one picture for which Woodman said that the French government had paid five hundred thousand francs. Mr. Kingsley walked back and stood long before it. A new respect, amounting almost to awe for the canvas welled up in him; but he could not see wherein the price was contained. He sighed and turned impatiently away. Interest could not linger where it did not comprehend.

That afternoon he took his boy to drive. His son, Conrad, Jr., was home from Exeter, "all collar, callowness and appetite," his father had described him to a friend.

Mr. Kingsley approved of the college course for his son, though he had briefly protested against it for Elizabeth. Sagacity had shown him that trained mental development invested in business was capital which brought a man a high rate of interest. His boy was not to rest on his oars as a rich man's son. But he was to be better equipped for rowing against the tide than his father had been.

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The horses flew down the speedway, but conversation did not follow the pace. There were many awkward pauses in which Mr. Kingsley wished that his son were more companionable. The boy had that thoughtful shyness which made speech rare except where he was understood. His father talked to him as if he were still in the kilt stage, then wondered that Conrad did not respond. His silence was attributed to the cub age: it was a deplorable period through which all male species must pass.

Yet after the drive he overheard mother and son in his wife's dressing room. Was that the tongue-tied lad talking so tumultuously? Was that his subdued wife, laughingly encouraging Conrad to describe—what? A football game! What could she know about one? Then he had remembered that she had gone with Elizabeth and a student to the college games. Resentment arose in the father's heart, then a jealous pang; he loved that boy—all his hopes were to be centered in him. He wanted to be his friend, his confidant. With a smile on his lips Mr. Kingsley started for the dressing room. He meant to extend the hand of

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fellowship; the act was in line with his new regime. But as he stepped into the room, his son's laughter ceased, his wife's smile died. Young Conrad slipped blushingly from the arm of his mother's chair and awkwardly waited. Mrs. Kingsley turned with interrogation but not welcome in her face. Bad news could not have produced a more paralyzing effect.

When the silence became emphatic the man who, in his world, had been accustomed to have heads touch the floor when he entered, made some excuse and left the room. The field of his good intentions had been swept by a winter blight. He saw that his boy was not comfortable with him. Nature had made Conrad Kingsley a parent: he had not taken the pains to make himself a father. His wife had trained their children and adapted herself to them. The hour of companionship alone with Conrad in the dressing room had been her reward.

Something in the magnate's well-arranged plans had miscarried. He sat down, alone and hungry, with the gnawing famine of the heart. This pain was deadened only when he asserted that he would conquer all ob-

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stacles, even to winning his family and his divine right to happiness. For years he had labored for this reward.

When the family gathered at dinner around the table's soft candle-light, his spirits again rebounded to the morning's high-water mark. He announced that he would accompany his wife and daughter to the opera. Elizabeth entered a solicitous protest: did he think that he would enjoy "*Tristan and Isolde*"? The implication nettled him. He reminded Elizabeth that he had sung in a church choir in his youth. If other people could endure the so-called "best" music, he thought that her father could. Elizabeth shot a Sphinx-like smile at him and shrugged her white shoulders above her black gown. This irritated him. He wished that Elizabeth would not flirt with him. He was her father; he desired her confidence, not the crumbs thrown to an elderly beau.

The Kingsley box commanded a comprehensive view of the brilliant circle of the opera house. For years the head of the family had paid for this box but had seldom entered it. Now he felt that it was good to

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be there, good to be able to listen to a great master's great work. In his eyes Elizabeth and his wife, with their refined beauty, outshone the bedazzled women near by. Elizabeth's jewels were only one string of pearls; but she carried an armful of American Beauties whose colors were a bold deepening of the flush in her cheeks. His wife looked like a faded daguerreotype of Elizabeth. The expression of resignation in her eyes made him move uneasily. He would bring back hope and enthusiasm to them by making her young again like himself.

In the first act of the opera the passion of Isolde's acting, the stinging scorn of her voice in denouncing her lover, held Mr. Kingsley's interest and swept him on. But he was woefully disappointed in the tenor. His desire to attend the opera had been stimulated by curiosity to hear this man whose notes had literally a golden worth. Mr. Kingsley finally concluded that the tenor was a fashionable humbug: to his mind plenty of men might be found who could sing as well at one quarter the price.

In the second act Isolde and an officious woman had a long altercation which the neo-

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phyte in opera did not understand. His mathematical mind began to calculate the financial status of the audience. The result netted billions, with the satisfying conclusion that the calculator's own wealth occupied no small share. This finished, he became restless—he was not used to sitting still so long. His chair did not fit him, no matter how much he moved to find his adaptability. Listlessness, then a lethargy crept over him. He pulled himself together and sat up very straight, feeling that the tail of Elizabeth's eye was upon him. When Isolde gracefully waved the scarf to her approaching lover, his waning interest revived. But the act seemed excruciatingly long.

Between the acts some men entered the box and grouped themselves around Elizabeth. Young Woodman said that he had never heard the opera sung better and he had listened to it ten times. Mr. Kingsley regarded him with open skepticism. He would have thrashed Conrad Jr., once, for telling a lesser lie.

In the last act, with customary directness, Conrad Kingsley frankly acknowledged in his inner consciousness that he was bored.

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The unfortunate Tristan, wounded and doomed, consumed one hour in dying. No action broke the scene's tedium, and of its psychology the manipulator of markets had never heard. He felt certain now that the audience was a herd of hypocrites; like him, he knew that the majority would prefer one sweet melody to all this exclamatory jangle. The people were doing a Lenten penance; Mr. Kingsley would like to prescribe it for some of his enemies. Pride and Elizabeth alone kept him from going out.

Invisible fingers seemed pressing his eyelids until to lift them became an agony. Then the lights all over the opera house went out as if snuffed by gigantic shears. The next thing that he knew, Elizabeth's hand was on his shoulder as she awoke him and said that it was time to go home.

As they drove through the streets the head of the house railed against fashions, fads, and hypocrites. Mrs. Kingsley quietly returned that his criticism might be true of the boxes, but could hardly apply to the crowded galleries. The galleries contained seats purchased by true music lovers often at the cost of personal self-sacrifice. Eliza-

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beth and her mother then began to discuss *leit motifs*, and the objector was obliged to be silent. He went to bed feeling physically exhausted and nervously undone, though not able to define why.

The next day, Sunday, again began happily. Generally, Sundays had seemed tedious to the active business man and as so much lost time. He agreed with his associate, who had said that "the week was given to rest up from Sunday." But to-day he craved its peace. A large church claimed him as trustee and financial backer. The atmosphere of the sanctuary always soothed him; he had planned some of his best deals there.

But to-day he had no *coup d'état* to originate, and was obliged to listen. The text of the sermon was, "Where there is no vision the people perish." The theme the expounder deducted was the reality of the ideal, of following the vision as a practical guide in material affairs, with soul-poverty as a sub-heading. Mr. Kingsley had never liked the minister so little. As the moneyed man of the church, the financier's word was law. He wondered if the time had not come for the flock to find a new shepherd. Mr.

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Kingsley wished to be cheered. In spite of his deeply entrenched sense of deserving happiness, the seeker felt that he was not even dimly realizing it. What he would have liked was a "well-done-good-and-faithful-servant" style of address. But he was determined that no minister should rob him of his reward, nor yet preach him down.

The afternoon was voted to be spent in reading; there were many subjects upon which the business man had always intended to be well-informed. A popular book of science was his choice. But after reading several pages the reader awoke to find that he was not comprehending a sentence. His eyes read the words while his mind moved along the old grooves. It worked out the problem of how, if he were still an active force in affairs, he might circumvent the bulls in their next trick to be played upon the market. The book of science was neglected for one of fiction which proved equally futile. The effort to lash back attention by the whip of his will was so fatiguing that he finally abandoned it. The rest of the day was spent in sleep with the result that he lay awake most of the night.

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Monday morning found him so debilitated that he determined to run down to his country place for a change. He had never had leisure to enjoy his summer home, though every Saturday during the warm months had seen him plowing in his yacht toward his sumptuous estate. But he always carried his secretary with him and figured and dictated as they steamed along. Once arrived, the telephone linked him still to his office. Sunday night found him returning to the city by train.

At the gates of his home he left the trap which had met him at the station and walked through the woods leading to his house. The patient trees lifted their bare boughs, the gray, interlaced branches giving promise of the beauty that later would soften and clothe them. As his eyes swept the vast, silent stretches, Mr. Kingsley shook off some of the despondency that had weighed him down. The sense of proprietorship of all that solemn stillness was a cooling draft poured over his feverishness. He had been wise to seek the change. One more such day in the city would have wrecked his nervous system. Business had never exhausted him as these

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hard-earned days of leisure had done. When he returned he meant to invite his family on a trip around the world. Travel was the proper course for a man of culture. In it he would find outlet for his abounding energy and the longed-for opportunity of enjoying life.

At a turn in the woods he saw a man sitting sketching near the bend in the bay. It was young Woodman, to whom Elizabeth had given permission to enter the grounds.

Mr. Kingsley left the path and plunged through the woods, treading on tender wild things as he walked. He looked long at the artist's canvas.

"Where in this scene do you find all of those colors, Woodman?" he asked.

"I don't know. Don't you see them?" young Woodman replied. Mr. Kingsley shook his head. Then Woodman remembered that he was talking to Elizabeth's father; and the way to talk to girls' fathers, he believed, was to adopt a facetious tone.

"It must be a gift of second sight," he continued, whimsically. "You see, Mr. Kingsley, you money magnets have the deeds to your big estates, but you aren't the true

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owners. We artists are the real landlords and the sea-lords of the world."

Mr. Kingsley smiled and went on; but when he came to the summerhouse he went in and sat down. At one stroke the occasional insight of youth had unconsciously defined his burden. His mind was working as it had not worked for years; he felt suddenly weary and very old. Was it true, he asked himself, that he owned everything but possessed nothing? If so, when he followed his plan of visiting foreign countries, what would he see? Truth told him only as much as he carried with him. Picture galleries would mean streaks of paint; Bayreuth—Elizabeth's Mecca—musical Bedlam; cathedrals—stone piles, not architecture; venerable ruins—decay, but not history. He shuddered to think of how he would be bored.

Why was he not able to enjoy these fruits of the world's highest living and thinking? He faced the question honestly, for he never deceived himself. For the first time he saw that those "best things" that he wished to enjoy were not material; they were without money but not without price. The powers with which he had been endowed to enjoy

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them through disuse had become atrophied; night and day he had abnormally developed one faculty—commercial aptitude—cheating, nay, robbing himself by a systematic despoliation. He knew now the high price which money costs.

What might he call his own? His family? —how little he possessed them! With sudden insight he saw that no tie could be close without a community of interest. His wife and children had tried to be kind; they could not do it without effort. When he closed the front door he felt sure that a sigh of relief sung itself through the household. The essential loneliness of his life swept over him, running side by side with theirs, but never touching.

Might he not change? Yes, but the deep-bedded “moral deposit of the years” was against it. He felt himself mortared fast in an eternal mold of *his own casting*. The virtue of fluidity seemed to have passed from him. He had thought to free himself from his long slavery; the jailer, habit, held him. At middle age he had meant to carve a new future; he found that the spendthrift years had chiseled for him, each stroke leaving an

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indelible blow. They had wrought—he must abide by it. In the sunset of life he could not turn and face the East.

Then Fear arose. What must his future be? He bowed his head while the billows swept over him, leaving a sediment of bitter fact. It told him that a man can own only what his soul possesses: in the light of true values he saw himself a pauper, pitifully poor.

Had he gone to his wife with his burden, it might have been lightened; but pride and a life-long habit of self-sufficiency forbade. For their young days' sake she might have forgiven him the long years of systematic neglect. He had justified himself by saying that he was working for her; he knew now that he had been working for himself.

For hours he sat gazing at the unlovely image until the instinct of self-preservation asserted itself. He must return and take up his life, it said, with this consolation: no one else knew him as he really was. That hour in which he had seen his nature's petrifaction must be buried in his own bosom. While he alone knew his soul's incrustation he could still face the world of men.

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The next morning he returned to his city home. At the door the man told him that Mrs. Kingsley had a headache and was lying down. He went upstairs softly, but stopped on a landing; through pillared arches on one side one might gaze below into a small library or den. Here Elizabeth's voice arose as she read to her mother:

"This is my case.
If I go back to God, yet bring
No offering; if I render up my soul
Without the fruit I was ordained
To bring—"

The reader stopped, while the silence became pregnant.

"That will be father's case," Elizabeth said, softly.

"Hush," her mother reproved. Then Elizabeth's voice was again raised, this time entreatingly as she knelt by her mother and sought to comfort her.

"Forgive me, mother; don't cry! Will it never cease to make you unhappy? Have you not Conrad's and my whole heart?"

The man on the stairs grew white. So they knew—his wife and his children! They had seen that petrified thing before he had

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met it himself! How could he endure such refinement of shame? His next act was characteristic; one path alone seemed open to him. He made an instantaneous decision, then drew himself up, his whole bearing changed: he would treat the situation from the old lines. In a few seconds he had reached his room and rung up his private wire.

“Give me the latest stock quotations,” he demanded of a clerk in his office who had answered the ’phone. Mr. Kingsley jotted down some of the numbers as the clerk read the stocks from the ticker. His stables were then called up; the horses ordered without delay. As he waited he penned these lines to his wife:

“Am called urgently back to the office, where I am likely to be busy some months. Sorry to hear you are not well. You need a change. Take the children and go on a long trip—around the world, as we spoke of. Shall be too busy to get away.—C.”

Ten minutes later a carriage plunged down the avenue like an ambulance on a hurry call. Within sat a man leaning forward, eagerly figuring, going back to the only life that he could enjoy.

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THERE are figures that the world sees tripping along the uneven road of life in a flippant, irresponsible fashion, their twinkling feet barely touching the ground, their buoyant spirits always in the blue ether. The rough places, when met, are skimmed over, and do not retard them. The brambles that scratch and bruise other pilgrims are lightly brushed aside or deftly dodged. Their whole life seems one gala day. But unless they are cut down in the heyday of their youth, there comes a time when pitfalls are met, too wide to be nimbly leaped; when obstacles are encountered that cannot be lightly surmounted; when blows fall too heavy to be escaped, crushing them entirely or developing character that had remained latent; character whose existence by most people was not suspected, and that astounds us by its strength and sweetness; character capable of self-denial and even heroic self-sacrifice.

“Mademoiselle” was such a butterfly. She

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flitted from flower to flower in her own dainty fashion, absorbing what sweetness and pleasure she could from each, and casting the blossom aside when she had deprived it of what had been the best it contained. She was a butterfly that pleased the eye and ornamented the landscape, but one that caused the passer-by to shake his head and ask what the end would be. Could she go on in that way forever? Would life always yield her honey, unmixed with gall? Would she ever become serious, less selfish, less flippant? Would she ever marry and settle down? Or, if she did not, would she grow old, as other women did, or forever remain distractingly young and irresponsible as she was now?

Mademoiselle was no longer a young girl, people said. At twenty-eight it was time that a woman should long since have been at the head of a house, the mother of a growing brood. But Mademoiselle shook her head and said that she really wouldn't care for it; that she was just beginning to find out how to enjoy herself; that she loved her freedom, her liberty, her good health, her ability to relish the flavor of all things, too much to exchange them for any uncertainty.

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The unkind ones said that the real reason was that she loved all men too much to marry one; that she was a disgraceful little flirt, and that they pitied the man who really did win her. And they could not forgive her the fact that, in spite of her frivolity and general undesirableness in their eyes, there were a number of men who were undoubtedly willing, and even anxious, to accept the position of husband to Mademoiselle, and be led by her the dance that they predicted.

It was Josiah Dalrymple who christened her "Mademoiselle." She had some French blood in her; and being rather proud of the fact, she did her best to accentuate it. It was hardly an affectation, for her tastes were innately French. She had developed the habit, when a child, of giving an expressive and decidedly foreign little shrug to her shoulders. She could speak the language, too, it being the one study to which she had paid any serious attention, and she loved to chatter it. Dalrymple said that she reminded him of a picture he had once seen in the Paris Salon; a figure in fancy dress, that might have served as a model for "Folly," but was simply catalogued "Portrait of a Young Lady;"

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and ever afterwards he had called Elise Coudert "Mademoiselle."

Dalrymple was about as little like a butterfly as she was like a grub. It had fallen to his lot to be one of the toilers of the world, and though still a young man he had won a place and name for himself by his own untiring efforts. He was serious by nature and upright through principle. He believed thoroughly in the gospel of hard work, and knew that success worth having would not come easily. His life was earnest, his purpose unflinching, his amusements few. Mademoiselle was among the latter. When he had had a particularly trying day, downtown, it rested him to drop in, on his way to his rooms, at Mrs. Coudert's attractive home. The drawing room was always light and airy—anything heavy and severe being excluded by Mademoiselle, whom Mrs. Coudert never opposed; and he could generally have a little chat with Mademoiselle herself. It was sure not to be a drain on his intellect, while his eye was gratified by the tasteful surroundings, and his ear amused by the conversational twitter, although of Mademoiselle herself his reason did not always approve. It

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refreshed him even to scold her, presuming as he often did upon his old acquaintance and the friendship he had had with her brother, now married and living far away.

He went up the steps to her house one afternoon, unusually depressed, on account of business complications, and met young Waterbury coming out. Waterbury was a tall, smooth-faced, manly-looking fellow, with features like those cut in a cameo, but now pale and set. He went by Dalrymple with an unsmiling nod, and the latter passed into the house.

Mademoiselle was still in the drawing room, with a countenance that told no tales, but was as serene and fresh as usual. It was absurd, he thought, that she should look so young; and it made him angry to find her so smiling and unruffled when he thought of the despair that he had read in the eyes of the man just gone out.

“What have you been doing to that boy?” he asked, after he had shaken hands and drawn a chair up near to her.

She laughed, and flushed a little as she replied:

“Nothing, O father confessor, except to

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tell him how foolish he was. Tea?" she asked, questioningly, turning to the cups on the low table beside her, and picking up a thin slice of lemon with the tongs.

"No, thanks," he said, shortly; "you know that I hate the stuff. I only take hot lemonade when I have a cold."

Mademoiselle scored one word in her small mind. It was "grumpy," so she waxed more amiable herself. She moved her chair back a little and faced him. Putting two small feet, in ridiculously pointed, high-heeled slippers, on a low footstool in front of her, she let her head rest on the back of her chair and her hands drop, in a resigned fashion, into her lap.

"What is it, Josiah?" she asked, looking at him in a quizzical way—she always called him Josiah when she wanted to tease him—"what is troubling your soul now?"

He got up and commenced to pace the floor, before replying. Then he leaned against the mantelpiece and looked down at her. She felt that he was in one of his most disapproving moods, but glanced up at him innocently.

"I was thinking of young Waterbury,"

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he said, quite seriously. "I am sorry for him."

She turned her head a little uneasily.

"For being so foolish?" she asked, gazing up at the ceiling.

"No," he replied; "he couldn't prevent that. But you might have done so. Why did you not tell him that he was foolish at the beginning of the winter? Why did you let him play the devoted knight to you, going about with you and seeing you day after day, becoming wrapped up in you, only to be told in the end that he was 'foolish'?"

"Because, my dear Josiah"—with unusual sweetness—"you can't tell a man not to fall in love with you before you are sure that he is going to do it; and after that—well"—with one of the characteristic little shrugs, and a smile that showed her even white teeth—"it's generally too late."

Then, changing to a more plaintive key, she said:

"Don't be disagreeable to-day, Jo; you know how I dislike disagreeable conversations. And don't stand leaning there, looking down at me as if you were a preacher and I the sinner. I know that I'm frivolous, I

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know I'm vain—fond to distraction of attention, even. You see I admit it all, so you can't argue with me. I assure you I agree with you. I am quite hopeless. Now sit down”—as he smiled a little—“and be pleasant, and let's drop that tiresome boy. Isn't he handsome, though? What a nose, and what shoulders! I could almost adore him.”

Dalrymple dropped wearily into the chair near her.

“I think that I *will* have some tea,” he said; “I am tired.”

“What? Change your mind weakly, like any woman?” she exclaimed, joyously, delighted to think that she had diverted him.

He leaned his head on his hand and watched her fingers fluttering about among the tea things. They were white, with the pinkest of nails, and fairly glittered with rings. He thought she wore too many rings. He had often told her so; but they were the one ornament in the way of jewelry of which she was prodigal.

“I could not live without them,” she had once said, holding her palms out with the ten jeweled fingers extended in front of her and gazing at them fondly. “They are a

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moral support to me, really, just as good clothes are, you know. Perhaps you don't understand that, either, but that's because you're not a woman. I love my rings, and really don't believe I could exist without them. They mean so much to me. I love them for the fire they contain, for the sparkle that they give out. If I feel downcast, I move my hands about, and the rings glisten and seem to say, 'Cheer up; there is light and life in me,' and I brighten immediately. They amuse me," she went on, looking down at them again. "This ruby was once a drop of blood in the heart of a carrier pigeon who was bearing a letter from a knight to his lady fair. But at the end of the journey, an arrow sent by an unerring hand pierced him through, and he fell dead at her feet. She picked him up tenderly, and a drop of his blood crystallizing on her hand, a new stone was created, called pigeon's blood ruby.

"This sapphire is a hexagon cut from a bit of clear Venetian sky. This emerald is a part of the crest of a wave, and the diamonds around it are its foam. And the opal—my dearly beloved opal, maligned for centuries of foolish superstition—is the sea and the sky

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combined, the fierce flame of the fire and the delicate tint of the seashell; the strongest and palest colors of nature, fighting for supremacy. That is a stone that is alive—that is the one I love most. My rings are a part of me. I could not give them up. Vulgar, you think, to wear so many? Perhaps so; but at any rate I don't pile on other jewelry. I never could bring myself to be barbarian enough to punch holes in my ears, not even to hang thousand-dollar diamonds from them; and as for bracelets, I despise them!" and she held up two round arms, letting the lace from her puffed sleeves fall back to the elbow, showing how bare of ornament the arms were—and how very tapering as well.

"How long have I known you, Mademoiselle?" Dalrymple asked, as he leaned forward easily and took the cup she held out to him.

"Eleven years," she replied. "What an age! Don't tell me you remember how old I was then."

"But I do," he replied, smiling a little in his slow way. "I remember perfectly. Eleven years——" He sipped the tea and seemed to be thinking. "And how many

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lovers have you had since then, Mademoiselle?"

"How do I know?" she replied, pushing the footstool away somewhat impatiently, feeling that the coming lecture had not been averted, after all.

"No, you couldn't be expected to remember, of course," he said; "but I think I do. I have been a spectator, you know. When I first knew you, you were only a child, but you were very much as you are now. There were danglers even then. The first that I recall were young Winslow and old Howard. They were always hanging around you. Then there was that English chap who blushed so, and the titled Italian whom we all hated because he looked like Mephistopheles. And that awfully nice fellow—Babcock, wasn't it?—who had it worse than some do, and who left so suddenly and went ranching. They say," he went on, looking thoughtfully down into his cup, "that he has—gone to the dogs since."

"Well," she said, feebly, "could I help it? I could not make myself love him."

"No," he replied; "of course you couldn't help it. You good women never are to blame

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for anything. You never drive a man to drink or to folly and ruin. It is always *his* fault if he does any of these things through love of you. You never take a young boy and let him grow to care for you, to make you his ideal, to fairly worship you, only to be laughed at in the end. You never start him in life with false and bitter ideas of women because *one* has disappointed him. You irreproachable women never break men's hearts or wreck their lives. It is always their own fault, you say. There are some sins, Mademoiselle," he said, speaking very slowly, "that are not down in the decalogue and yet are crimes."

"And by all this you mean," she said, quite lightly, "that I am one of the criminals?"

"I mean that you are one of the irreproachable women," he answered, looking at her seriously. "You have been born with a charm—a power to please—I don't know what it is, but I have watched it work destruction for eleven years. You are not the prettiest woman I know, Mademoiselle, nor yet the most intellectual, but you are the most fascinating, and—"

"Thank you," she interrupted, drily. "It

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was fitting that you should administer that sugar pill after being so brutally frank."

"I am afraid that I feel like being still more frank," he continued; "and perhaps I do not choose my words happily. But I felt sick at heart when I saw that boy at the door, and knew so well what had happened. Where is he now, and what do you suppose he will do to-night?"

"It is not as serious as you think it is," she said, gently. "He will get over it."

"Yes," he agreed; "he will get over it. They all do, in time. But the getting over it, Mademoiselle; you don't know what that means. Irreproachable women never do."

"If it were not I that he cared for, it would be some one else," she said in self-defense, throwing her hands apart. "How many men marry their first loves?"

"More than you think," he answered; "and I can't see how that argument helps matters much. It doesn't do any good to tell a man who has had smallpox, and whose face is badly scarred, that he might have had it much worse. And though he gets over the disease, he carries the scars, you know, to the grave."

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“And you think that I give people emotional smallpox?” she said, gazing down at her rings and turning them around.

“I think that you are one of the irreproachable women,” he repeated again. “I don’t know anyone who can do more harm than an attractive, frank, heartless, good woman. Her frankness disarms men and wins them to her. She seems so sincere—and the rest is easy enough. But she simply plays with them for her own amusement. The desire for lovers is as strong within her as the taste for drink in some men. She moves their strongest emotions, while she never has a flutter above admiration for a straight nose or a godlike physique. She knows her power and finds a fascination in exercising it. It becomes, in time, meat and drink to her, and she goes on for years with no other aim in life than to gratify it. And the end is——” He hesitated a moment.

“Go on,” she said, coldly. “The end, Josiah, is what I have been hoping for ever since you began.”

“The end is,” he said, “that this woman is generally caught in her own snares. She at last finds out that after all she too has a

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poor thing called a heart that is not as lifeless as she thought it. She learns what it is to love and to suffer."

"You mean——?" Mademoiselle said, leaning forward in her chair, her hands tightly clasped, the color and brightness gone from her face.

"I mean that she at last meets some one to whom she does not in the least appeal; some one on whom all of her wiles are lost; some one who does not care for her. She inspires polite indifference, the most maddening thing in the world—that is all."

If he had brought a lash down on her shoulders he could not have stung her more. She rose quickly and went to the window, standing with her hands still closely clasped in front of her, looking out at the placid passers by. It was some time before she spoke.

"I am trying to think whether I shall take the trouble to answer you or not," she said at last. "You have gone farther than you have ever gone before, and I have let you. I had a morbid curiosity to be present at my own dissection. I am glad to know what you really think of me. But I hate such con-

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versations! I hate such scenes! I am not given to making long speeches, and, as you told me, I am not clever. But whatever my faults are, saying unpleasant things is not among them. Flattery may be part of my wiles, but at least it never hurts. I feel," she said, turning toward him and passing her hand wearily over her forehead—"I feel at least ten years older than I did when you first began."

She leaned a little on a table near her, and his heart smote him, she looked so frail and childish. "Perhaps it is all true, what you have said. Perhaps I am what you think. But what do you know of a woman's heart? What do you know of her inner life and motives? Simply what you observe, and what she is pleased to tell you. Because she does not wear her heart on her sleeve, or surrender it to some man, are you justified in thinking that she is without one? How do you know that she has not suffered? How do you know that her frivolous life is not an effort to hide it? What right have you to predict pain for her, when——"

She turned away, unable to finish. Dalrymple gazed at her, aghast. Her slender

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frame was trembling, and for the first time he saw that her eyes looked pained and earnest. He hardly supposed her capable of expressing any emotion save almost childish joy or pleasure; yet now, as he looked at her, he felt as if he had laid bare her quivering soul. He took one step toward her, and held out his hand.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, softly, “forgive me.”

The front door opened, and in an instant the portières leading from the hall were parted, as Mrs. Coudert entered the room. Dalrymple dropped his hand, and turned to greet her. He did not see Mademoiselle alone after that, and soon took his departure.

As he stepped into the open air he drew a long, deep breath, and almost doubted the reality of the scene he had had with Mademoiselle. He was glad that Mrs. Coudert had come in just when she did, before he had had time to take back those cruel, truthful words. It had been the hardest task of his life, but he was glad that he had had the strength to say them. It had settled one thing in his mind. She cared for some one else. She had suffered—she, who never

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seemed to have a care or a serious thought. It was some one whom perhaps she had known in her early youth—some one whom she had sent away and regretted; some one whom she had found out too late that she loved.

Mademoiselle in love! Mademoiselle married! He could not imagine such a thing. He had schooled himself to say that for a friend—a recreation—she was charming; but for a wife—he could imagine no greater folly. What did she know of duty and self-sacrifice? He almost laughed at the thought of connecting the terms with her. He walked along quickly toward his club, and tried to tell himself that he had done right; but Mademoiselle's eyes, no longer laughing, but dark, with a hurt, pained look in them, haunted him. The sweet, plaintive voice rang in his ears. "What do you know of a woman's heart?" it asked; and he could not still it.

A few days later the worst that he had dreaded for his business came upon him. Every day chronicled fresh failures, and in one of the crashes he saw the enterprise that he had given years to building up, totter and

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fall like a house of cards; the money he had toiled to amass melt before his eyes. In the opinion of the world he was a ruined man, everything—save honor—gone.

There was nothing to do but to begin again. This he preferred to undertake in another city. He settled his affairs as best he could, and prepared to leave town. He had some money, left him by his mother, and he intended to travel a little before he decided where to locate and again begin the battle of life.

He postponed his good-by to Mademoiselle until the last. He had not seen her since that day when, he now felt, he had presumed—when he had touched upon a wound where he supposed there was nothing but callousness.

She came down in a clinging gown of palest heliotrope, and nestled back among the cushions at one end of the couch. She said that she had not been feeling well; that she certainly must be getting old, for she was developing nerves. And she played with a little gold smelling-bottle, holding it occasionally to her nostrils. It was one of her airs, she told him; she never in her life had

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been known to faint, but simply liked the smell of it. Then there was a little pause in which he felt conscious and constrained, yet could not tell why.

“I am going away, Mademoiselle,” he said at last, looking away from her, “and I could not bear to go without apologizing—without telling you how sorry I am—you understand—for what I said last time.”

“Yes,” she replied, smiling; “I understand. It was quite tragic, wasn’t it? You will let us hear from you—mother and me? We shall be anxious to know what you are doing.”

It was plain that she did not wish to talk of that last conversation, and he became more uneasy than ever. He had wanted to say so much about his repentance, but felt that he had been cut off. He gazed quite stupidly at her hands as they played with the vinaigrette, wondering what made them look so different. They were as white as ever, the nails were as carefully manicured, but—they did not seem like the hands of Mademoiselle.

He had it at last. The fingers did not wear a ring; and he had never seen her without rings before.

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“Your hands look strange, Mademoiselle,” he said. “Your rings—part of you, you know—where are they?”

A wave of color rose, dyeing her throat and face. It filled him with amazement. He sprang to his feet, a sudden thought seizing him. Thrusting his hand deep into his pocket, he drew out a draft, signed by the cashier of a well-known bank, but sent to him anonymously. He had not had time to trace it, and did not intend to use it, but believed that some business friend, wishing to help him, had sent it. He gazed now with horror from the slip of paper to the little, ringless hands of Mademoiselle, then into the eyes that no longer met his, but drooped guiltily.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, sternly.

The small hands went up to the face, covering the hot cheeks.

“Mademoiselle,” he repeated less severely, but with reproach in his tones.

Still there was no reply, but the pillows shook, and he knew that she was crying. The next time that he said “Mademoiselle,” it was from his knees beside her, where he gently took the little palms from her face, and looked into her eyes with the lashes all wet.

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Then he dropped his head on the unadorned fingers, and kissed them reverently, as one kisses the hands of a saint.

When he lifted his head again to take her in his arms, something glistened on the hand of Mademoiselle, but it was not a diamond.

GENTLEMEN UNAFRAID¹

HASTINGS had always been sensitive to atmospheric influences. He had, therefore, not been at Westmoreland twelve hours before he felt the presence of a subtle undercurrent. He divined, too, that he was not intended to fathom it. Whatever the mystery enveloping this old Virginia home, its occupants—two brothers, the last of their race—did not wish to become the means of his enlightenment.

The brothers were marked by no peculiarity except a more than fraternal courtesy and mutual devotion. They were men of artistic instincts whom affluence had not enervated nor prevented from cultivating their talents. When weary with work and with being “citizens of the world,” they came to this quiet home, with its halo of past glory.

Hastings had been sent for as junior member of a New York firm to draw up a will for the elder brother. Oliver Crowninshield, savant and littérateur, had been troubled by

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a persistent insomnia brought on by over-work. He had produced a book of verse that had the merit of not disturbing the Rialto, while it brought joy to a discerning few.

Francis Crowninshield, the younger brother, was an artist and architect. Though abrupt and absent-minded, he possessed the saving quality of drollery which appreciated even his own shortcomings. This was supplemented by a gift of human kindness which made him a brother to all men. Though cordial in manner, each brother was enveloped in a reserve which generally accompanies a pure strain of gentle breeding. In feature Francis Crowninshield was comely, while Oliver was classic in regularity. In stature they were of the same medium height and build.

Hastings's work was soon finished. His intention had been to make a holiday of necessity and while he was on Southern soil to push "on to Richmond" to visit its scenes of Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War interest.

His business transacted, he found himself remaining without apparent reason. One day Francis detained him with a sail down

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the James. The next, Oliver beguiled him in the library with a bibliophile's treasures. The brothers' love of nature, their knowledge of men and of books, held him enchanted. Oliver was his favorite until opportunity threw him alone with Francis. Then Francis was the man whom his soul had thirsted to meet.

He felt now that these fascinations had been exerted with design. The brothers had deliberately delayed his departure. Why had each, last evening, with thinly veneered eagerness and without the knowledge of the other, asked him to remain? What was the catastrophe each secretly hoped his presence might avert?

On the morning of the fourth day he went downstairs pondering the motive of his double invitation. In the square hall he stopped to look at the old portraits that lined its walls. The sword had been willingly wielded by the Crowninshield ancestry. Hastings noted the blue and yellow of the Continental uniform, the gray of the Confederacy, and even the red coats of King George. A slight noise diverted his attention. From the hall he could look through

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a vista into the billiard room. Standing upon a chair in this room Hastings saw Oliver Crowninshield. He had loosened the leather cord stretched across the billiard room to hold the scoring buttons. He now held this cord in his hands in the shape of a noose.

Involuntarily Hastings started forward. At the same time Francis Crowninshield entered the billiard room from an opposite door. He hurried to his brother and gently took the cord. When he saw Hastings his manner assumed a sudden gaiety.

“Ah, brother!” he exclaimed, “are you trying to tidy the house so early? The critics say that you can make fairly good lines, but you can’t mend this one. It hasn’t been renewed since McClellan held a house-party here. Would you like to see one of our souvenirs of that stag visit, Mr. Hastings? Observe that door,” pointing to one of mahogany, set in the white wainscoating. “Our little brothers of the North were pleased to use its panels for pistol practice. See the bullet holes, if you please. An enterprising manager of a railroad has offered us a comfortable sum to open Westmoreland, which is closed the larger part of the year, to tour-

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ists who would enjoy feasting their eyes upon that door. The public, you know, has ever morbidly wished to see the scars and thrust its hands into the wounds."

Hastings felt that Francis Crowningshield's conversation was subterfuge, yet to cover what he could not say.

"If you are interested in old portraits," Oliver said, breaking his silence as they seated themselves at the breakfast table, "we must tell you the history of some of those in the hall. The man in the ruff, near the fireplace, fought in Bacon's Rebellion. The faded gentleman next to him was once fiery and served under Cromwell. The Stuart portrait is our great-grandfather. He gave Cornwallis a sharp lesson in this section. Our race seems to have been born Dissenters, fearing neither gods nor devils—gentlemen unafraid."

He was called from the room and Francis gave an abrupt laugh.

"Gentlemen Unafraid," he quoted, as he placed his spoon in his grape fruit. "Don't be too much impressed with our venerable valor, Mr. Hastings. The cowards didn't get into canvas, that's all. Posterity, you

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know, always idealizes. Confidentially, that old gentleman before whom you are expected to salaam was more celebrated for his punch than his punches. His son repaid him by being a dipsomaniac, while *his* issue, our grandfather, developed epilepsy."

"And your father?" Hastings asked.

"Suffered from the sins of his fathers, of course," in a tone which announced that further family communications had ceased.

A smell of burnt leather penetrated the air. Outside a gardener was burning refuse. When Hastings passed the billiard room he noticed that the leather cord had been removed.

As he sat writing letters at an old escritoire in his room, Francis Crowninshield entered. He apologized for his intrusion and then went with his usual abruptness to the heart of the matter that was agitating him.

"Mr. Hastings," he said, "I could see that your suspicions were aroused by the unfortunate scene in the billiard room this morning. I want to tell you the meaning of that scene, and why I have so urgently begged you to remain. Your presence may avert a tragedy. My brother, through overwork, has suffered

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from nervous exhaustion. This developed into melancholia, which has recently shown suicidal impulse. When I tell you that our father died in an insane asylum you may understand my reason for alarm."

A servant knocked and said Mr. Oliver desired his brother to join him at the stables.

"He does not wish me to be alone with you," Francis whispered after the servant had gone. "Would you mind taking a walk at eleven? Strike off to the left through the woods. I will meet you at the opening near the highway beyond. I must see you. It is asking much, I know, of you, a stranger, to remain, but—"

"Don't mention it, Mr. Crowninshield," Hastings replied, wishing to allay his host's suffering, his sympathies strongly stirred. "I will do what I can for you. Your brother is the gentlest gentleman I have ever met. Your devotion will save him, I know."

"Thank you," Francis Crowninshield said, shaking his hand appreciatively, and quickly left the room.

Hastings's mind refused to concentrate upon his letters. Suicidal mania seemed written upon the page. What a Nemesis to

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pursue one to whom Fate had otherwise been so generous!

Another knock at the door. At Hastings's word Oliver Crowninshield entered. His dreamy eyes were now alert. Hastings thought that he had never before seen beauty blended with refinement of so high an order in one man's face.

"I—I have something that I must say to you alone, Mr. Hastings," he began with dignity, yet evident embarrassment, "but hardly know how to begin. Do you believe in heredity?"

"Not necessarily," Hastings answered, stooping to pick up a pin to hide his own embarrassment. He would have given his chances of a judgeship to escape this man's self-humiliating confession.

"I asked you to remain at Westmoreland not solely for the great pleasure of your company," the low tones continued, with the soft, fascinating Southern accent. "There is a terrible taint in our family." He spoke slowly. Hastings felt an intense longing to help him—to spare him—but was bound not to speak. "Sometimes this taint appears as violent insanity—sometimes as a mild mono-

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mania. Or it takes the form of"—he moistened his lips—"suicidal tendency."

The pathos of the case filled Hastings with a choking sensation. He could not listen to this man's plea to be saved from himself.

"I understand," he said quickly. "I shall write the firm that I shall remain on the James—for the hunting and fishing."

"Thank you," Oliver said, wiping his forehead and pale face. "Otherwise, I fear the most tragic results for—*my brother Francis*."

Hastings recoiled.

"Your brother Francis?" he echoed.

"Yes," covering his face with his hands. "He is struggling against suicidal mania."

"Good God!" Hastings exclaimed, under his breath.

"You are shocked?" Oliver asked, regaining his composure now that his burden had been delivered. "The view of suicide is purely educational. What we call life may be the real death. The ancients did not consider suicide an evil. The hemlock draught was legitimate. The Stoics practiced it. The Jews authorized it in preference to falling into the hands of an enemy. Is not disease an enemy? The Bible has two great suicides,

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Samson and Saul. Epictetus taught: 'If you do not like your life, you may leave it; the door is open.' "

"But surely you do not sanction such a course?" Hastings exclaimed in revulsion.

The iris of the soft brown eyes contracted. Their radii seemed to focus upon Hastings in two piercing points.

"Of course not," Oliver replied, softly. "I only wish to tell you that my brother is not alone in believing in the individual right of exit when interest in the play has ceased. It is always the unsatisfied inquiring intellect that wishes to take this step. Think of the beacon lights of history who have gratified this impulse—Demosthenes, Mithridates, Hannibal—the Carthaginian wore poison constantly in a ring. And there are others too countless to name."

Hastings felt like a man who had been shot twice in the same place. His brain was blurred. He longed to be alone and probe his wound.

"Of course you understand that the suicidal impulse is curable," Oliver continued. Hastings had never before felt so completely the possibility and charm of music in the

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human voice. "Lord Clive in early life twice attempted suicide. But he lived long afterward and gained power and fame."

"Clive shot himself at fifty," Hastings corrected.

A swift look of resentment shot over Oliver Crowninshield's face. He was too much in love with his theories—too accustomed to having them accepted—to bear contradiction.

"There comes a time at least once to every thinking being when death is preferable to life," he asserted.

"Yes, when the emotions have been abnormally strained," Hastings argued. "But self-preservation is the first law of life. May you not be mistaken about your brother?"

"You mean because he is sane on every other subject? The desire for self-destruction may be present where there is no intellectual delusion. Moreover, the insane, when watched, will assume a cheerfulness for weeks. Don't you know why I was taking that cord down this morning? It was as a preventive. Last night I found Francis testing a rope made of twisted towels."

Again Hastings recoiled. One of these

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men was departing from the truth. Hastings realized the horror of his position when he became conscious that he could not determine which one.

When he was free he struck out for the woods. The beauty of the landscape was blotted out by the hideous abstractions of his thoughts. How often he had wished to visit an old-time Southern mansion! How often Fate grants our wishes, but in a form that crushes desire!

He saw Francis Crowninshield sitting upon a boulder by the highway. Hastings's first impulse was to tell him of his brother's awful countercharges. Then discretion bade him wait. The habitual instinct of the lawyer suggested that he hear both sides of the evidence. Wisdom must then weigh the testimony and decide which man was sane.

He chose carefully the words that he would say.

"Mr. Crowninshield," he began, "you told me you did not wish your brother to know that you had asked me to remain at Westmoreland. Yet he had already asked me, last evening, himself."

If Hastings had expected this state-

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ment to precipitate confusion he was disappointed.

"I am not surprised," Francis replied, his eyes moistening. "It was a pathetic appeal to be saved from himself. He is torn with the old, old conflict of good and evil forces. We cannot tell what superhuman efforts Oliver is making to win."

Hastings leaned against the fence, baffled. "I must retract my word of this morning," he said, trying another tack. He regarded his companion from the corner of his eye. "The case is too serious. I cannot remain. Your brother should be placed under scientific treatment."

"Have you had any experience with insane institutions? The mere presence of those demented would drive him mad."

"Then have a physician here."

"Oliver would resent it. His cunning would only more cleverly outwit us. This is not a case for drugs or surgery, Mr. Hastings. We must 'minister to a mind diseased.' The successful physician of the future must also be a metaphysician. At present I know of none such."

Hastings's eyes turned full and searched

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his companion's apparently frank features. Could he believe him? Consciousness replied, "Could he disbelieve him?" Then he thought of the other brother's loving solicitude. How could he discredit him?

"Why not try travel?" Hastings suggested.

"And have him jump from a boat or train?"

Hastings shuddered.

"No, all that he needs Mr. Hastings, is careful watching and healthful diversion. I will supply the first. Your presence will offer the second. We will shoot, fish, and explore the historic places in the vicinity. Why should you shrink from remaining?" he demanded, resentfully, reading Hastings's thoughts. "You would not have known of this weakness if I had not told you. Does not my brother offer unusual charm as a companion? His trouble is due to temperament as well as taint. Every poet is half mad. Byron said that he expected to die at the top first, like poor Swift. But my brother shall not die!" he exclaimed, passionately. His face flushed. His eyes flamed. Hastings saw the pent-up passion contained

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in this man's nature. Was it the demon that was consuming him? Hastings wondered as he watched the paroxysm pass.

"I have made a study of this subject, Mr. Hastings," Francis continued, controlling himself. "Insanity is divided into two kinds—acute and chronic. Acute insanity is subdivided into general paralysis of the insane; chronic mania, into"—counting them off on his fingers—"dementia, idiocy, imbecility, and softening of the brain."

"For heaven's sake stop, or I'll have them all," Hastings exclaimed.

"If you are to remain, you must understand," Francis said, firmly. "We fear only the unknown. Melancholia taking the form of suicidal impulse is curable. At least, so the best authorities assert. Homicidal tendency is not."

"I will remain," Hastings said, as the quickest way of cutting short the conversation. The brothers' mutual knowledge of this dread malady, he felt, confused rather than aided decision.

There was little sleep for Hastings that night. The situation seemed at once so simple, yet so insoluble. The natural method

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of appealing to the brothers must be rejected. Whichever one he appealed to would, of course, claim rationality. The insane, he knew, always asserted themselves sane. He could only curse his own credulity and the pretender's plausibility. That one of these men was playing a part he felt certain; the motive was to divert suspicion and gain a wider scope for his own action. Hastings's business was to discover which one. Even with heredity, he felt that it was highly improbable that both brothers should have developed the same tendency, showing itself in the same manner and at the same time.

Hastings had retired, but his eyes refused to close. His mental vision faced this improbable problem. Was ever man so placed? In the stillness he heard a sound. The front door below him creaked, as if gently opened. Instinct hurried him to the window before he realized that he had left the bed. A figure was moving across the lawn. It was one of the brothers. The gloom refused to reveal which one. The figure rejected the path and struck out for the river. Hastings's flesh crept, but he reached for his clothes. He must follow and save that life at any personal

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risk. As he hurriedly dressed, a second figure crossed the lawn. Now it broke into a run. It was the other brother, bent on rescue—faithful by night as well as day.

Hastings strained his eyes through the darkness. If only he might discover which was the pursued, which the pursuer! His presence now was not needed. With a coat thrown over his shoulders he sat down at the window to await results.

Presently, after what seemed an eternity, the woods appeared to move toward Hastings. Then the indefinite black blur resolved itself into two forms. Hastings strained forward. Which one? his mind demanded. Which one? As they approached he saw that the brothers had linked arms affectionately. They were talking now as if taking a customary stroll. There was no evidence of one leading, the other being led. Their cursed courtesy was veneering the tragedy which Hastings believed had been dangerously near completion. Their mutual manner, always so deferential, now seemed exaggerated, as if to baffle truth.

When the front door closed Hastings broke into a profuse perspiration. A weak-

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ness followed which showed him for the first time that he had nerves. He resolved to leave Westmoreland in the morning, then fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next morning Oliver Crowninshield found opportunity to whisper to Hastings: "I saved him again last night. The river—he was on the point of jumping in."

Hastings looked at the lustrous, intelligent eyes of Oliver Crowninshield and believed him. It was his brother whose monomania urged him to take his own life.

Half an hour later Francis led him to see an old sun dial that was in the rose garden.

"He tried it again last night," he said, simply. "It was the closest call that he has yet had."

Hastings looked at the troubled features of Francis Crowninshield and believed him. It was his brother who was insane. Then he wondered if his own senses were leaving him, since conflicting convictions existed simultaneously in his own mind.

Hastings found that without great rudeness it was impossible to leave Westmoreland that day. The brothers had planned a day for his pleasure—a morning of duck

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shooting; an afternoon given to visiting historic spots.

In spite of the dark shadow which enveloped him, Hastings spent a red-letter day. No further mention was made of the imminent danger. The congenial charm of the men bound him to them as if by a spell. The fact of their mutual dependence upon him—the knowledge that a blight distorted the vision of one—made its appeal. Hastings responded with an affection more often the result of years of companionship than of days. When the brothers talked of Oliver's nearly completed medieval romance, Hastings saw that their minds were storehouses of Old-World wisdom and lore. Pity replaced revulsion. Duty demanded that he remain. He must find a key to this problem. Its solution must not only solve but save.

The day out of doors had its effect. That night sleep was deep in the household.

The next morning in the breakfast room, before his brother appeared, Oliver Crowninshield lowered his newspaper to say: "Francis tried to swallow his tongue last night."

"That is absurd!" Hastings exclaimed.

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“Of course it is, to a perfectly balanced mind,” Oliver replied sweetly. He never lost his equanimity, like Francis. “I could tell you of more ridiculous things than that.”

He left the room. At the same time Francis appeared.

“What was my brother saying to you, Mr. Hastings?” he asked eagerly.

“I prefer not to say,” Hastings replied.

“Is that quite fair? Considering the exigencies of the case, don’t you think we ought to pull together? Last night Oliver left the gas turned on in his room. I discovered it in time.”

“Strange that I did not detect it also,” Hastings replied.

Francis Crowninshield’s impetuosity came to the surface. His face darkened.

“I do not like your tone, Mr. Hastings,” he said, icily, his eyes burning. “Again I ask you—what did my brother say?”

But they were interrupted and an explanation was impossible for the rest of the day.

That night, when Hastings went to his room to dress for dinner, he received a shock. He had declined the services of the brothers’ personal man and reached for his razor to

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shave himself. Around the case he found a strip of paper. He removed it and read these words: "The maximum of suicides occurs in June. For humanity's sake remain through the month." As he was not familiar with the brothers' handwriting he could not say which hand had penned the note. But when he reached for his razor—*it was gone*.

Strained nerves now declared their utmost tension and apprehension reached its height. Hastings felt that he must recover that blade before he slept and at any cost.

He appeared at dinner in his evening clothes, but unshaven. He made no apologies, but searched the brothers' faces to detect which was the thief. Even now one might have the weapon concealed upon him. Hastings shuddered when he thought of the bloody work this night might hold. After dinner he would demand the razor when the brothers were together. The one who produced it would be the guilty man, unless fraternal devotion led each to deny all knowledge of the theft.

He went to his room first for a special brand of cigars. As he passed the dressing table something gleamed in the gas jet's dim

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light. It was the ivory handle of his razor. Some diabolical agency had read his thoughts and, replacing the razor, had frustrated his dénouement!

He forced himself to return to the billiard room. He found Oliver Crowninshield reading, and Francis chalking a cue. Hastings noted the change in the brothers' appearance in the few days since his arrival. Whichever one was deranged, whichever his brothers' keeper, the strain had told alike upon each. Hunted, fearful eyes, deepening pallor and fresh furrows told of great internal disturbance and even of exhausting physical unrest.

"Oliver has reached a second stage," Francis whispered, trying his cue. "Auditory hallucinations. He thinks that he hears voices calling to him. Religious fanaticism is the most dangerous, you know."

"And what have you?" Hastings asked, yet without the scorn his words implied. A sense of brotherhood with these men had supplemented pity. He wished to know only that he might help.

"I have grave fears for his recovery," Francis replied, seriously.

Hastings had almost decided to believe

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him when Oliver Crowninshield handed him a book.

“Have you ever been interested in the teachings of Zoroaster, Mr. Hastings?” he said. “There is much wisdom, not unlike our Proverbs, in the Persian Vedas. Yet they probably antedate Proverbs. Take this volume to your room and read some passages that I have marked.”

When Hastings was alone he found a note concealed in the book. “F—— says,” it read, “that ‘when life is unbearable, death is desirable and suicide justifiable.’ He suggests that we prove together that we are gentlemen unafraid.”

Hastings compared the two notes. But the writing was not the same. His mind returned to the razor. It was possible, he thought, that one hand had placed the first note, that another had taken the razor. Suspicion would be thrown, of course, upon the writer of the first message. If the determined man had taken his own razor, the theft would have been discovered by the servant.

What did that last clause in the second note mean? Had the madman an infernal plan to depart this world and take with him

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his much-loved brother? Did a double tragedy threaten?

Hastings paced the floor and made his plans. The house was isolated. It was too late to reach the nearest town to-night. He would leave at daybreak and report the case to a physician. He could no longer bear the responsibility. His presence seemed to develop cupidity, not to divert attention. He would not again face the brothers' suavity. Whether he wished it or not, the afflicted one should have the advantage of modern scientific treatment. Hastings packed his grip. Then, soothed by his decision, he fell asleep.

In the gray of the morning he was awakened by some one shaking him. He sprang at the dim outline beside his bed. As he grappled with it, he recognized the voice of the brothers' body servant.

"The house is on fire, Mr. Hastings," he said. "Let go and jump from the portico. The lower rooms are ablaze."

Smoke now curled in at the door.

"Your masters?" Hastings asked, as he pulled on some clothes.

"Have been warned. They will escape by the rear."

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Hastings stepped out on the portico. Flames belched out of the lower windows, the pillared portico protecting him as he jumped. The man followed, the soft turf breaking the fall.

On the lawn frightened darkies ran about in confusion. A few carried futile pails of water; others, feeble garden hose.

The house had been ignited in many places, though not near Hastings's room. Hastings foresaw its doom.

"Where is Mr. Crowninshield?" he demanded. No one knew.

Hastings ran to the rear. As he reached it, a small chest flew out of an upper window. It broke as it fell, and closely written manuscript scattered itself over the grass.

"Bring a mattress—the ladders are useless," he cried to the herding servants. "Pick up those papers and guard that chest."

A mattress was brought from an outhouse.

"Hold it," he commanded. Then he threw back his head and shouted to the upper windows. "We are holding a mattress. For God's sake, both of you—*one of you*—jump!"

Two figures leaned out of a topmost win-

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dow, struggling, persuading, arguing, with arms entwined. One was pleading for life, his own and his brother's. One was in love with death and would not be denied. Hastings tried to fathom the problem in the grayness. But the similiar height and build of the men hid the truth.

When neither man jumped, something in Hastings's head snapped. He paid for it later with brain fever. As the flames for the last time showed him the brothers, their arms, no longer struggling, were still entwined. The one who had lived faithful died faithful. When the house fell the secret was entombed.

“UNTO THEM A CHILD”: A CHRISTMAS STORY

LIKE the eye of Providence a hospital never sleeps. The Dark Angel does not proclaim his visits, and a life-saving station must ever watch.

John Shepherd found himself waiting in the hospital one early December night under rather unusual circumstances. Like many men able to write their fortunes in seven figures, he had built a town house much more impressive than his own needs or tastes prescribed, and had proceeded to close it for two thirds of the year. On account of the beauty of its architecture this house had become one of the distinguished points of the city. A genuine regret was therefore felt when one morning the papers announced that it had been destroyed by fire. Horror deepened the disaster when it was learned that Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd had barely escaped with their lives.

Many doors were at once opened to the

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Shepherds by sympathetic friends. But Mrs. Shepherd, acting upon her physician's advice, chose private apartments in the scientifically equipped city hospital.

Perhaps no one in her set less intentionally or more positively exerted an influence than Madeleine Shepherd. One felt that in spite of her warm humanity, here was a woman who was still sustained by the manna of the wilderness; that a life in the vortex of worldliness had never engulfed or even swayed her. In short, she was what one critic had termed “a spiritual genius.”

When she married she had committed the dangerous experiment of choosing her complete antithesis in temperament. Not even their great mutual love could have saved their happiness from wreck if John Shepherd had been a less tolerant man. When his wife's ideals soared to heights above him, he did not try to stop their flight with the keen arrow of ridicule. He respected her opinions, revered her earnestness, and secretly agreed with her that the ideal was the only real guide.

They had been married fifteen years and had been childless. To Madeleine Shepherd

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this had been a severe disappointment. The disappointment to John Shepherd had been keen only on its material side. He wished not so much for a child as for an heir. He had never considered adopting one. The law could not give him, he said, what he had not begot.

But now the dear wish of both their hearts was about to be realized. Filled with the deepest emotion and keenest suffering that he had ever known, he sat desolate with bowed head, waiting a summons to go to his wife. He was roused by a tap on the shoulder.

“You may go in to see your wife for a few moments now, Mr. Shepherd,” a doctor’s voice said.

“She will—live?” his dry lips formed.

“We think so.”

“And the child?”

“Is a fine boy.”

The miracle of birth, like the mystery called death, produces analogous sensations. John Shepherd entered the sick-room numb with awe. When he reached the shadowy bed he could only drop on his knees beside it and hide his face in his hands.

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“Poor boy!” a faint voice said, while a hand stole slowly toward his head.

Sob after sob choked his throat. She let his overstrained nerves find vent, then said with overwhelming pride, “Aren’t you going to look at us? See, it is Christmastide—I have given my Lord a son.”

He could not trust himself to speak. But he kissed the hand near him and suffered himself to be led away. Then he went out into the night and walked until the first red streaks of dawn declared another day.

The days now passed swiftly toward the Yuletide, for happiness sped the dial. John Shepherd was becoming used to the immense thought of parenthood. Night and morning he visited the hospital and many times a day telephoned there, through a telephone he had ordered placed by his wife’s side. Her room became a garden where roses and lilies bloomed. When he looked at her he felt almost like shielding his face from her radiance. He had never before seen a being so saturated with happiness, so burnished by the holiness of joy.

A few nights before Christmas he went to the hospital late after a business meeting.

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As he passed down a long hall he heard voices in a small room adjoining one of the wards—a room set apart for the nurses where they often made coffee for the young doctors who were on night watch. He caught the tones of a woman's voice, low but penetrating.

"Did you ever see two people so engrossed in a child? How hard for them when they learn the truth!"

"Who will tell them?" a masculine voice inquired.

"Doctor Jameson. He thinks that it will be safe on the fourteenth day: it's only the twelfth day now."

John Shepherd stood still. Of whom were they speaking? His own child was just twelve days old. Something closed around his heart and gripped him. He groped his way into a room used for private operations. One gas jet burned dimly and cast a wan light on the barren plainness of the room. At one end stood a huge machine looking like a dangerous engine of war, but in reality a sterilizer for basins, instruments, and bandages. Glass tables and iron washstands flanked the sides. Everything was painted

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white and was scrupulously clean. How careful these doctors were in all externals of their profession! Were they capable of secreting an important truth from some one who ought to know it? Some one, for instance, who had a child twelve days old? Were his child's faculties impaired? he asked himself. Was he deaf—blind? His glance read unconsciously the labels on blue bottles of iodine and glass jars filled with saline solutions. Next to these were cans of ether and chloroform. Better their kind oblivion, he thought, than that such a sorrow should come to his wife! For her, motherhood had not begun with birth. He knew that for months her soul had been magnifying the Lord: spiritually and intellectually she had believed that she was forming the character of her child that future generations might call her blessed. But she was not the only mother in the hospital. There must be other children twelve days old. He refused to believe that aught was wrong. But the next morning, after a restless night, he visited Doctor Jameson, the eminent surgeon, and put a direct question to him.

“Is there any fact regarding my son,

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Doctor Jameson," he asked, "that I should know and do not?"

"There is," the doctor replied, unflinchingly; "though we had not meant to tell you so soon."

John Shepherd's eyes narrowed. "What is your justification?" he asked, sternly.

"The strongest possible," Doctor Jameson answered: "the preservation of human life."

His earnestness somewhat mollified the tension of his visitor.

"Tell me the facts," he said, more gently.

"The facts are, Mr. Shepherd," the doctor began—"the fact is—the child with your wife is not her child!"

"Whose is it?" John Shepherd asked.

"The child of a young woman in the hospital whose husband deserted her. Your child was born dead—a result of the shock of the fire. Your wife was desperately ill. We knew that but one thing could save her. The instinct of self-preservation is strong, but the maternal instinct is stronger. We substituted this child because it was expedient and best."

Expedient! The word rang with a mocking sound in John Shepherd's ears. "Have

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you doctors no consciences?—no appreciation of anguish? Is your profession simply a game?”

Doctor Jameson's eyes flashed though his lips responded to the habitual lesson of self-control.

“You are right, Mr. Shepherd,” he answered. “Our profession is a game—a game of life and death. And we play it always to win. We won it for your wife with every chance against her. She was racked with convulsions and we administered anæsthetics. When she became conscious she asked for her child. In her weakened state the truth would have killed her as if we had struck her a blow. We decided to give her the same chance that we would have given the poorest woman in the hospital. We had a two-days-old infant, unwelcome and unloved, whose mother was too ill to be intrusted with it. We placed this child in your wife's arms and your wife revived. That child, and not science, saved her life. It was a necessary temporary deception to secure a permanent benefit.”

The storm had passed through the man opposite, leaving him weak and blighted like a tree whose vigor had been swept away.

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“You must pardon me,” he said, wearily, “but I can’t seem to take it all in. I seem to see only the moral side. My wife—how can I tell her? She has always said that some pains are more cruel than death.”

The doctor moved uneasily.

John Shepherd wiped his brow. “She has taught me to have such a simple creed,” he continued; “a thing is right or it is wrong.”

“The longer a man lives, Mr. Shepherd, the less he defines the line between right and wrong. He begins to obey ‘judge not.’ ”

John Shepherd rose slowly like an old man. “Perhaps so,” he said, languidly. “At least it gives one food for thought: whether a deceitful act may not have a righteous motive.”

“But we gave your wife life for death,” Doctor Jameson said, nearly losing his patience.

“She would say that you could not take away her life,” he returned, moving toward the door.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders almost imperceptibly. “Mrs. Shepherd must be a remarkable woman,” he said.

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“Remarkable?” his visitor echoed, and his tone gave the physician a glimpse of a relationship which he knew to be rare even between husband and wife.

All day the thought of them haunted his mind. How would such a woman regard the truth? He began to dread the time when she must know. And the next day Fate put a trump card into his hands.

Doctor Jameson left the hospital at noon, erect, with a holiday air, and walked confidently to his carriage at the curb. In a short time he was driven to the financial center of the city, and waited impatiently till he could be admitted to the private office of John Shepherd.

“I have good news for you, Mr. Shepherd,” he said with alacrity, noting the hollow eyes which told of a sleepless night. “The mother of the child with your wife died this morning. There is now practically no obstacle to the complete retention of the child as your own.”

He spoke with authority as one used to giving advice which was considered cheap even at very high rates.

“My wife must decide,” John Shepherd

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returned. "How soon will it be prudent to tell her?"

"I think that it would better be postponed—definitely," the doctor answered with a significant smile.

John Shepherd shook his head. "I could not live with a lie between us. It would be easier to stab her than to tell her that the little one in her arms is not our own. Yet she would want to know the truth. I feel that we should give up the child. My wife, I am sure, will feel the same."

Doctor Jameson looked perplexed. "Would you rather that I broke it to her?" he asked.

"No, though I thank you for the offer. It would be better, I think, for me to tell her myself."

That night he told her. It was Christmas Eve, on the fourteenth day, just as they had planned from the first.

He never knew in what words he told her. They were alone except for the child whom she could scarcely bear from her side. He remembered taking both her hands tightly and in an overwhelming flood of tenderness somehow stammering out the truth.

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He would never forget her eyes. They darkened with unbelief, then gradually he saw hope die. She did not speak, but lay fearfully still. He recognized the futility of words and remained quiet. Then when his own heart could endure the silence no longer he tried to assuage her grief with a torrent of broken words.

“It will not be so hard when you realize that the little one is not ours. We will live closer than ever to each other. Think—we have every blessing except this one.”

She let him go on, knowing that the words brought him relief. But what she most wanted was time to think.

He would not leave her, and she knew that his pain would be less if with her than if away. So she told the nurse that he must remain. All night he sat in an armchair by her side, clasping her hand. At midnight a church bell tolled the glad tidings: “Peace on earth, good will toward men.” Once he lifted his head and asked: “Have you had any rest?” But her eyes were wide open as she replied: “No, dear, not yet.”

In the morning when Christmas broke she was very pale, but her eyes had the look of

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one who had been through the fiery furnace and had come out purified.

“All night I wrestled with my soul, John,” she said softly. “At first it seemed as if God had deserted me—there was no ‘good will toward men.’ But now I know better. He took away my own child, but He placed another one in my arms. It is as if a voice had said: ‘Woman, behold thy son!’”

John Shepherd bowed his head. He could bear her suffering better than her serene fortitude. “He is not your son,” he murmured.

“Neither was John the son of Mary,” she replied. “That is the lesson—it is easy to love what is one’s own. But what if we are called upon to illustrate a larger ideal?—to love what is not our own?”

“How do you know what tendencies this child has inherited?” he argued.

“I have thought of that,” she replied; “but environment, I believe, is stronger than heredity. If it were not there would be no hope for the world. This is what this trial means to me: it would not have been difficult to nurture our own son. That is natural. But for a finer development we are required to

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give as much love and care to what is not our own.”

He knew then that she had chosen her course and that the decision came from pathways where he could not follow.

“I shall never have a little one now of my own,” she continued, and for the first time tears rolled down her cheeks. “And the reason, I think, is that love for my own child would have been too personal, too individual. I might have become the selfish mother that I have always deplored. True motherhood is inclusive, not exclusive. Do you see now why I want this child to be really ours?”

“You think it our duty?” he answered.

“No, nothing so harsh as that. I think it our privilege. Will you help me to make it our happiness?”

“What do you wish me to do?” he asked huskily.

A light broke over her face “Give me your other hand,” she said. “We three will form a circle that will widen but will never break. Can you repeat the vow that I have taken?”

“Let me hear it.”

“I, John Shepherd——”

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"I, John Shepherd," he echoed.

"Do solemnly promise to love and cherish this my God-given son."

For a moment the room remained in silence. Then the force of those new vibrations swept him on and involuntarily he repeated her words.

Outside Christmas bells were pealing: "For unto you a Child is born, unto you a Son is given."

As they fell upon the room his wife dropped back on the pillows. He started up thinking that she had fainted. But when she opened her eyes he saw that she had been overcome with joy. As he gazed upon her his own eyes grew dim. He felt the possibilities of life from her larger standpoint and saw what he himself might become.

With this revelation the clouds of the last few days rolled away. Overcome with the new instincts of his risen self, he stepped forward, and stretching his arms out toward the child he cried with the first happy ring his voice had known for days: "Give him to me; he was sent to me, too!"

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